



Sikhism and Major World Religions

Surindar Singh Kohli

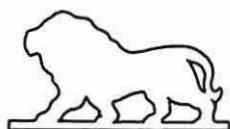
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SURINDAR SINGH KOHLI



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Dedicated
to
my grand-children
Anjan, Divya, Bhagteshwar, Daaneshwar and Aashish

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Foreword

During my fourth visit to Canada, I reached Vancouver on March 17, 1993 to stay for a few months with my son Darshan Inder Singh Kohli, who has settled down here with his family. S. Tara Singh Hayer of *Indo-Canadian Times* very kindly intimated the Sikhs of Canada and America about my arrival through the issue of his popular weekly dated April 8-14, 1993. Several Canadian Sikhs already knew me through my writings. Sardar Pal Singh Purewal of Edmonton had read my book *Travels of Guru Nanak*, published during the quincentenary birthday year, in 1969, by the Panjab University, Chandigarh, where I was the Professor and Head of the Punjabi Department. He invited me to the city of Edmonton to deliver three lectures on 16th, 17th and 18th of April, where the Baisakhi Festival was being celebrated by Sri Guru Singh Sabha, Edmonton. It was a pleasure to meet Sardar Purewal. He has recently completed his commendable Almanac, based on knotty astrological calculations. I am confident that with the publication of his Almanac, many dates appearing in various historical works will be set right.

It was at Edmonton that S. Gurdarshan Singh Bhar of 19, Wheatstone Crescent, St. Albert-Alta T8N 3J9 came to see me at the house of Sardar Purewal. He had read earlier two of my books *Philosophy of Guru Nanak* (published by the Panjab University, Chandigarh) and *Outlines of Sikh Thought* (published by Messrs Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers (Pvt.) Ltd., 54, Rani Jhansi Road, New Delhi-110055) and he wanted that during my stay in Canada, I should complete this work, making a critical and comparative study of

various concepts of Sikhism with major world-religions, so that the Sikh students be made conversant with the distinct thought-content of their own religion. This work, is thus the outcome of the earnest desire of Sardar G.S. Bhar.

In my book *Philosophy of Guru Nanak*, I had briefly made a comparative study of the thought-content of Guru Nanak with the living religions of the world. The religion, which has a scripture of its own, a distinct set of injunctions and a tradition, may be called a living religion. In this sense, there are eleven living religions in the world, namely Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism and Sikhism in India, Zoroastrianism, Judaism, Christianity and Islam in the Middle East, Taoism and Confucianism in China and Shintoism in Japan. Out of these religions, Shintoism has its following confined in Japan, Taoism and Confucianism in China and Jainism in India. Other religions have spread far and wide besides the country of their origin, therefore I have included them in the category of major world-religions.

Several concepts belonging to both philosophy and religion of Sikhism have been discussed briefly in my book *Outlines of Sikh Thought*. I have mostly taken up these concepts in the present work, as desired by S.G.S. Bhar, because they will amply clarify for the Sikh student and other students of religions, the distinguishing features of major world-religions. Wherever considered necessary, I have touched upon the other religions also.

I am confident that the students of religion and especially of Comparative Religion will be amply benefitted by this short treatise.

Surindar Singh Kohli

God and gods

In Sikhism, *Mool Mantra* or the Primary Sacred Formula describes thus the Nature of God (Brahman) or Ultimate Reality :

1. That God is One and Only One, without a second,
2. That He is Truth, the Ever-Existent Lord,
3. That He is the Creator of the universe,
4. That He is without fear and enmity,
5. That death cannot assail Him,
6. That He does not take birth,
7. That He is Self-Existent and
8. That He can be Realised by the Grace of the True Guru.

God is both Transcendent (*Nirguna*) and Immanent (*Saguna*). Whereas He is beyond this world of three modes i.e. *rajas* (activity), *tamas* (morbidty) and *sattva* (rhythm) or *maya*, he is also All-Pervasive. He is Omnipresent, Omnipotent and Omniscient. He is Changeless and Flawless. When he Wills, He becomes many. He begins His Sport like a juggler. He creates the universe and brings the matter out of Himself. Before the creation, He is in abstract meditation (*Sunn Samadhi*) and devoid of attributes (*Nirguna*), but after the creation, He, as Ishvara, manifests Himself as treasure-house of qualities (*Saguna, Guni-nidhan*). He is Faultless, Good, Holy, Light, Primal Cause and essence, Beyond our cognizance, Pervasive and Everlasting. He does not incarnate. All the gods and goddesses are His Creation. He is a *Purusha*, who Creates the whole universe. There is none other separate Eternal entity except Brahman. He is the

Creator of the *prakriti* (*maya*) of three *gunas* (modes, qualities). He is a *Purusha*, distinct from other *Purushas* (*Jivas*/souls). He is *Adi Purakh* (who is from the very beginning), *Sat Purakh* (Pervasive and Everlasting), *Karta Purakh* (Creator), *Akal Purakh* (Uninfluenced by Time) and *Niranjan Purakh* (without the influence of *Maya*).

Sikhism versus Hinduism

The two aspects of God accepted in Sikhism are Upanishadic in origin. Upanishads constitute the final parts of the Vedas. The *Nirguna* or Transcendent aspect of God is known as Para Brahman and the *Saguna* or Immanent aspect as Apra Brahman. The former is Incomprehensible and devoid of Attributes and the latter is Comprehensible and endowed with Attributes. The former is non-temporal, non-spatial and non-phenomenal and the latter is the Creator and Lord of the temporal and spatial world. The former is called the Higher Brahman and the latter, the Lower Brahman. The Higher Brahman is described by the method of negation and the Lower Brahman by the method of affirmation. According to Shankaracharya, Brahman is the only Reality, the world is ultimately false and the individual soul is non-different from Brahman (*Brahm Satyam Jagan Mithya Jivo brahmaiva na parah*). According to Shankara, God can be viewed in two different ways. From the ordinary practical standpoint, God is Omniscient and Omnipotent creator, possessed of qualities. From the transcendental standpoint, God is Consciousness, Real, Infinite and devoid of qualities. Shankara emphasises the Reality of the Transcendental Brahman and regards Immanent Brahman (*Ishvara*), the individual souls (*Jivas*) and the world (*Jagat*) as appearances due to *maya*, which is an indefinable principle and cosmic nescience. In this sense, the world is illusory and appears real because of nescience (*avidya*). Such a deduction of Shankara about the world has not been accepted by the Sikh Gurus. For them the world is real and not false. Since Brahman is immanent in it, it is

also Brahman itself, because it is a manifestation of Brahman. The Sikh Scripture has accepted this view of Brhadaranayaka Upanishad that "Brahman is the Creator of the world, the maker of all. The world is His, it is indeed Brahman."

Undoubtedly, the Hindus worshipped many gods and goddesses. The hymns of the Vedas have been addressed to various deities. In due course, this polytheism developed into the monism (*Advaita*) of Shankaracharya. The idea of the Supreme God had been there in the Hindu Scriptures, about which the Brahmins and the priests had been ignorant, because they were out of touch with the heritage and had merely become the slaves of tradition. The *Prasthanas* (*Treya*) (Brahm Sutras, Upanishads and Bhagavad Gita) was studied minutely by a handful of Acharyas like Shankara, Ramanuja, Madhava etc., who made quite different formulations about God, soul and *maya*. The religious philosophy propounded by Shankara is known as *Advaita* (monism) by Ramanuja as *Vishishtadvaita* (qualified monism) and by Madhava as *Dvaita* (dualism).

The Monotheistic Faiths : Sikhism, Judaism, Christianity and Islam

Sikhism is a monotheistic Faith like Islam. Keeping this fact in view, several writers have talked about the impact of Islam on Sikhism in this respect. According to their contention, the Polytheistic Hindu Religion came under heavy criticism from the radical saints of the Bhakti Movement for caste-structure, idol-worship and ritualistic trends. The votaries of the movement found a great solace in the worship of the ONE and only ONE Beneficent and Merciful Lord. The Brahmanical suppression had created a sense of hatred amongst the exploited people. Though they were hard hit by the religious oppression, they were no less exploited by the tyranny of the rulers. Therefore they could not have kind sentiments for the high-handed administration. How could, then, the Islamic concept of God attract the radical saints and the Sikh Gurus ?

Though Islam is a monotheistic Faith, it believes in the prophethood of Hazrat Muhammad. It is recorded, "There is no God but Allah and Muhammad is the Apostle of God." Guru Nanak Dev accepted the first part i.e. the Unity of God, but did not agree with the second. During his nocturnal journey, the Prophet is said to have met God in the seventh Heaven. Islamic mysticism manifested itself as Sufism. For Sufis, God, the Absolute Being, is the only Reality. All beings emanate from Him. He is the real author of the good and evil. He fixes the will of man. By His Grace one attains the spiritual unity with Him.

Judaism is the oldest of the four Middle-eastern religions. It is the parent of two wide-spread faiths i.e. Christianity and Islam. It is the religion of the chosen people of Israel and is based upon two principles, monotheism and the choice of Israel. There is one and only One God, who is Omnipresent, Omnipotent, Omniscient, Eternal, Just and Gracious. He has created men in His Own Image, who can attain perfection through Love and Grace of the Lord.

Christianity is a historical continuity of Judaism. It accepts the ethical monotheism of old Hebrew Prophets. Whereas the doctrine of God in Christianity is monotheistic, it is also Trinitarian because it believes that God is the Father, Son and the Spirit. In other words God, Logos or Christ (the Son of God) and the Holy Ghost constitute the Holy Trinity. There had been a great controversy regarding the interpretation of this Trinity i.e. "Three persons in one Substance". The Son is begotten by the Father as the principle of salvation. He is the second person and co-eternal with the Father. The third person is the Holy Ghost, a supernatural being.

Buddhism, like Jainism, is a religion without God. Karma takes the place of God in Hinayana, one of the sects of Buddhism. *Shunyavada* is one of the most important schools of Buddhism. *Shunya* literally means 'empty void', but according to Madhyamikas or the followers of Middle Path, it means 'indescribable'. The word *Shunya* also occurs

in the verses of Guru Nanak as 'Sunn', where he has used it like Madhyamikas.

The Names of God used in Sikhism

The Lord revealed Himself through the Gurus and saints. These great mystics presented their experiences through their hymns, which reveal the exuberance of their love for the Lord. The whole range of experience was a spontaneous phenomenon. The mystic vision was the result of the inward urge created by circumstances. The Muslim names of God i.e. *Allah, Rabb, Khuda* etc. have been used in the verses of the Sikh scripture side by side with the Hindu names of God viz. *Gopal, Gobind, Damodar, Murari, Ram, Kanaaee, Shiva* etc. have been used for the one and only one lord, who is neither the God of Muslims nor the *Ishvara* of the Hindus. That Lord is the common father of all the created beings. The general masses knew that these Names were the names of the Universal Lord without considering their historical or etymological implication. The Names of God referred to above are all man-made names. The only name that can be given to the Lord is SAT i.e. the Ever-Existent Lord. Sat means truth, which abides for ever. Vaishnavas, Shaivas, Shaktas and other sects have created many names of their Ultimate Reality, keeping in view His distinctive attributes. But each of these does not focus the complete view of the Lord. It will be ludicrous to assume that because of the Vaishnavite names of God used in the Sikh scripture the Sikh religion is the part and parcel of Vaishnavism. Similarly it will be mere imbecility to consider Sikhism related to either Shaivism, Shaktism or other sects. *Vaishnavism* and Shaivism have their own *Sahansar Namas*. Though Islamic Names of God also appear in Guru Granth Sahib and most of the attributive names among the ninety-nine names of god of Islam can be applied to God envisaged by Sikhism, it does not become a part or the sect of Islam. If the word *Is* (ਈਸ) can be mistaken for *Isa* (ਈसा, Jesus) by the Christian missionaries and because of many

similarities in thought-content, Sikhism has no relation with Christianity. *Ik-Aumkara* and *Waheguru* are the names of God used by the Sikhs in their daily meditation.

Rejection of gods, goddesses, angels and other spirits

The Lord-God created the whole universe, including all the gods, goddesses, angels and other spirits. According to Hindus there is a galaxy of three or thirty-three gods, but also thirty-three crores of gods and goddesses. Since the One and only One God i.e. Transcendental Brahman has been adored in the Sikh scripture, all the gods and goddesses of Hinduism have been rejected. The *maya* of three modes (*Rajas*, *Tamas* and *Sattva*) came into contact with Brahman, with the result that the whole cosmos was created inclusive of all categories of celestial and non-celestial beings. The gods and goddesses being the product of *maya*, in relation to Lower Brahman, and being unable to loosen the hold of *maya*, cannot have a sight of the Lord. They are soiled by *maya*, but a devotee following the discipline of the True Guru can not only have a sight of the Lord, but can also merge in Him, just as a ray merges in the sun. There are innumerable universes and each universe has its own set of gods and goddesses. The same concept holds good in the case of angels and archangels mentioned in the scriptures of Judaism, Christianity and Islam, the spirits and celestial beings mentioned in the holy books of Taoism and Confucianism, the deities mentioned by Zoroastrianism and Shintoism, Jainism and Buddhism. Hence there is total rejection of all the gods, goddesses, deities, spirits, angels and other beings in Sikhism in the matter of adoration and worship.

Rejection of the concept of Incarnation

The Lord does not take birth, because whosoever is born, is prone to death, but the Lord is Immortal. Therefore Sikhism rejects the concept of incarnation. The gods and goddesses may incarnate, just as Vishnu is famous for

twenty-four incarnations. The Guru says that that mouth, which speaks of the birth of the Lord, be burnt, because it is a blasphemy. Hence the concept of incarnation stands totally rejected. In Hinduism, the most revered incarnations of Vishnu at present are Lord Rama and Lord Krishna, but according to the Sikh scripture they were only kings in different periods. The name 'Ram' of Lord-God in the Sikh scripture, pertains to the Omnipresent Lord and not Rama, the son of Dasrath. There are several incarnations of the goddess Parvati, the consort of Lord Shiva.

God without any relations

The Lord-God is Self-Existent (*Swayyambhu*). As the Creator, He is the Universal Father, but He Himself is without father and mother. None is responsible for His Creation therefore He is without any relatives. He has neither any brothers nor sons. Being without any kinship, He is Carefree, totally Independent and Master of his Will. He takes all the decisions Himself and does not consult anyone. Thus the sonship of Lord Jesus and the Prophethood of holy Muhammad do not fall in line with the Sikh concept. Moreover, the Lord-God is Merciful and Beneficent Lord for all His Creation. He has no special liking for any individual or a people or nation collectively. In this respect, there can be no 'Chosen People' for Him. The Universal Father cannot be partial in any case.

God and Satan

Since the whole Universe is the Creation of Lord-God, the Satan or Devil has also been created by Him. Though Satan or evil force has seemingly revolted against the most Gracious Lord-God and inspires the people for vicious actions, the Justice and Will of Lord-God reigns supreme. The Satan can be no rival to the Creator-Lord, because he also acts according to the Will of God. In Zoroastrianism, Ahriman, the evil deity is a rival to Ahur Mazda, the gracious God, but such a duality has been rejected in

Sikhism, In one stanza of *Japu*, the chief composition of Guru Nanak, the good creation of the Lord has been mentioned and in the following stanza, the vicious Creation of the same lord has been described. Both types of beings have been created by the same Lord-God.

God is merciful and kind

The Attributes of Lord-God mentioned in the primary sacred formula (*Mool Mantra*) are *Nirbhau* (without fear) and *Nirvair* (without enmity). Since God is Omnipotent, He is Fearless. He is also Gracious and Kind and never hostile or malevolent. Since God is devoid of enmity, He is never vindictive. He never avenges or retaliates. Every being gets the due reward for his actions. The Lord-God without malice can never be revengeful. In the Sikh scripture, He is called *Mehrovan* (the Merciful and Kind). In Hinduism, Lord Vishnu is called *Janardana* (tormenting mankind), though He is also Compassionate and Forgiver. Among the ninety nine Names of God in Islam, though He is shown as Merciful (*Ar-Rehman*), Forgiving (*Al-Ghafur*) and Kind (*Ar-Ra'uf*), He is also the Killer (*Al-Mumit*) and the Avenger (*Al-Muntaqim*).

God as Guru

The Lord-God of Sikh scripture is also the Primal Guru. God and Guru are one and the same. The Guru of Guru Nanak Dev is God Himself. Similarly, the Tenth Guru had God as his Guru. This aspect of God is not found in any other religion. As True Guru, the Lord saves the erring humanity.

God and the extent of His Creation

The expanse of the universe created by God is Limitless. The creation of the Infinite Lord cannot be delimited. The upper and nether regions each are not seven in number, as mentioned in Hinduism and Semitic Religions, there are lakhs and crores of them. There is no end of the creation.

The Immanent Lord is Pleased to see all His Universes. The cosmos is not the work of a semi-conscious or blind Power, it is the Work of an Intellectual and Rational Authority.

What Pleases God ?

None of the guises, symbols, forms, rituals, sacraments etc. please the Lord-God. He is not Pleased by any type of penances and austerities. He is Love-Incarnate and only those who love Him whole-heartedly and are absorbed in His Name, under the guidance of the True Guru are liked by Him. Guru Nanak Dev says, "The Lord-God is not Pleased by making music and musical tunes or reading the Vedas. He is not Pleased by mere concentration, erudition and Yoga. He is not Pleased by constant sorrow. He is not Pleased by beauty, wealth and revelries. He is not Pleased by wandering naked at the pilgrim-stations. He is not Pleased by giving gifts and alms. He is not Pleased by sitting outside in wilderness. He is not Pleased by fighting and dying as a warrior in a battle. He is not Pleased by those who roll in dust. The Lord takes into account the whole-hearted Love. He is Pleased only by being absorbed in True Name." (Var Sarang M. 4, Shalok M. 1, p. 1237). The absorption in His Name is the only Command of God (Sri Raga M. 1, p. 72).

Soul

In Indian Terminology, the word *Atma* has been used for soul and the word *Jiva* for embodied soul. It is a part and parcel of Brahman, though very small (Gaund Kabir, p. 871). It is finite, whereas Brahman is Infinite. It is like a ray of the sun and drop of the ocean. The relation of Brahman and *Atma* has been expressed by Guru Arjan Dev in the following manner :

He (Brahman) does not die, I have no fear (of death),
 He does not Perish, I have no worry,
 He is not poor, I am not hungry,
 He is without sorrow, I am without grief.....
 He has no ties, I am not bound,
 He does not toil, I do not sweat,
 He is not impure, I am not tainted,
 He is Blissful, I am always ecstatic,
 He has no worry, I have no anxiety,
 He is uninfluenced, I am without any effect,
 He is not hungry, I am not thirsty,
 When he is Pure, then I am deemed holy.....
 On meeting the Guru, the illusion hath been removed,
 He and I have become one, imbued with the same hue.

(Asa M. 5, p. 391)

The soul has its own individuality. Since it comes out of Brahman, it carries the qualities of Brahman. Like Brahman, it is eternal and deathless. Before the creation, it lives within Brahman and at the time of creation, it comes into the world and takes bodily form according to the Will of Brahman. The physical body decays, but the soul

continued forever. The following thoughts about the nature of soul are found in *Guru Granth Sahib* :

Neither it is a human being, nor a god,
 Neither an ascetic practising restraint, nor a Shaivite
 Neither a Yogi, nor an ascetic renouncing all worldly
 achievements
 Neither it has a mother, nor it is a son,
 Who lives within this (bodily) temple ?
 Nobody knows its specifications.
 Neither it is a householder, nor an Udasi (ascetic),
 Neither it is a king, nor a beggar,
 Neither it has a body nor blood,
 Neither it is a Brahmin, nor Kshatriya,
 Neither it is an ascetic practising austerities, nor a Sheikh,
 Neither it is alive nor dead,
 If anyone weeps on its seeming death,
 He loses the grace of his personality.

(Gaund Kabir, p. 871)

Guru Arjan Dev says :

It is a strange story, quite strange,
 the Higher Soul is like God Himself.
 Neither it is old, nor young,
 Neither it is prone to misery, nor it dies.
 It never dies, but exists from the very beginning,
 Neither heat nor cold hath any effect on it,
 Neither it hath an enemy nor a friend,
 Neither it experiences joy nor sorrow.
 It is the Master of all—the doer,
 It hath no father, no mother,
 But continues to exist from the limitless times,
 Virtue and sin have no effect on it,
 It is always awake within every heart.

(Gaund M. 5, p. 868)

The above quotation of Guru Arjan Dev pertains to *Para-Atma* or *Param-Atma* or Higher Soul, wherein a distinction has been made between Transcendental Brahman (*Nirguna*) and Immanent Brahman (*Saguna*). Immanent Brahman is, in fact, the Higher Soul, which permeates the whole universe. Guru Nanak Dev has mentioned in his longer poem *Siddh Goshta* that *Nirguna* (Transcendental Brahman) Himself manifested as *Saguna* (Immanent or Higher Soul). (Ramkali

M. 1, Siddh Goshta, p. 940). The distinction between the concept of soul in the above verses of Kabir and the concept of Higher Soul in the above verses of Guru Nanak may be closely looked into. The *Jiva* (embodied soul) transmigrates from one body to the other in accordance with the merits and demerits of its actions. It cannot escape the fruit of its actions. In itself, it is unborn and eternal, but when associated with the sense-organs and mind, it enters the cycle of births and deaths. The physical body becomes lifeless, when *Jiva* leaves it. Guru Arjan Dev writes in *Sukhmani* :

The soul's power is not in its own hands,
 The Doer (God) is the Lord of all.
 The helpless *Jiva* is under the Command of the Lord,
 Whatever Pleases Him, that ultimately comes to pass;
 Sometimes it abides in high positions and sometimes in low
 Sometimes it is in sorrow and sometimes it laughs with delight,
 Sometimes it is busy in back-biting and anxiety,
 Sometimes it is up in heaven and sometimes in under-world
 Sometimes it is the knower of Brahman.
 (Gauri *Sukhmani* M. 5, p. 277)

Whenever the nescience (*Avidya*) vanishes, the soul merges in the Higher Soul and becomes one with Brahman. The egg of illusion bursts forth, in the case of higher self (*Atma*). The lower self is ego.

The Soul according to Hinduism

In the words of *Mundakopanishad*, *Brahman* and *Jiva* are like the two birds sitting closely on the self-same tree. They are fast bound companions. One of them eats sweet fruit, while the other looks on without eating. In *Kathopanishad* it is written : "Know the soul as the rider of the chariot, intellect as the charioteer and mind as the reins. The senses are the horses and their objects are the roads. The enjoyer is endowed with body, sense and mind." The rider of the body-chariot is the enjoyer. The sense-organs, are directed by the mind. The mind works under the direction of intellect (*buddhi*) and the intellect is directed by the finite self or *Atma*. Thus *Jiva* is the active agent. It knows through the

intellect and enjoys through the senses and the mind. When the mind and the intellect are impure and uncontrolled, the finite self enters into bondage and experiences births and deaths. It experiences joys and sorrows because of its actions. The actions are the result of desires.

Five Sheaths

The ancient sages have mentioned five sheaths in which *Jiva* is encased. The uppermost sheath is the bodily sheath, which is sustained by food. It is called *annamaya kosha*. The next sheath is the vital sheath known as *pranamaya kosha*. It is sustained by vital forces. Then there is mental sheath called *manomaya kosha*. It constitutes the functions of the mind. The next sheath which depends upon the functions of the intellect is the intellectual sheath or *vijnanamaya kosha*. The last sheath, which is not merely a covering, but the very essence of the individual self, is the blissful sheath or *anandamaya kosha*. Unless the upper sheaths which constitute the activities of the senses, sense-organs, mind and intellect, drop down from above the soul, the blissful state cannot be realised. The blissful and ecstatic state is known as *Turiya*. For the realisation of this state, the finite self has to rise above the three states viz. waking state, dream state and dreamless sleep.

The Soul and the Six Systems of Hindu Philosophy

According to Sankhya Shastra, there are two ultimate independent realities i.e. *Prakriti* and *Purusha*. *Prakriti* is *maya* and *Purusha* is the soul. There are innumerable *Purushas*, and *Purusha* of Sankhya is neither Brahman nor a part of Brahman. It is an independent entity in itself. But according to Sikhism, Brahman and *Jiva* are *Purushas* in the background of *Prakriti*. Brahman or Supreme *Purusha* is the creator of *Prakriti* and does not come under its influence. *Jiva* or *Purusha* plunges into the field of action or *Prakriti* and repeatedly suffers births and deaths.

Yoga Shastra is complimentary to Sankhya Shastra.

Yoga has made an addition to the metaphysics of Sankhya and that is the addition of Godhead. God of Yoga is a special *Purusha*, who is eternally free, who is omnipresent, omnipotent and omniscient and who is above the law of *Karma*. He is only a special *Purusha* and not the creator and liberator. Liberation in Yoga does not mean Unity with God. It is only the separation of *Purusha* from *Prakriti*.

Vaisheshika Shastra deals with categories (*Padarathas*). It does not believe in God like Sankhya. The very first category is *Dravya* (substance). There are nine substances viz. *Prithvi* (earth), *Ap* (water), *Tejas* (fire), *Vayu* (air), *Akasha* (ether), *Kala* (time), *Dik* (space), *Atman* (spirit or soul) and *Manas* (mind). The first five are gross elements. They, along with mind are physical and atomic. The remaining three, along with ether are all-pervading and eternal. Whereas atoms are infinite in number, the souls are also infinite. Thus the soul is regarded as a substance. It is like an unconscious object and receives consciousness only when it comes into contact with the body, mind and the senses.

For Vaisheshika and Nyaya systems, the categories and the substances are the realities. According to Nyaya, there are four separate valid means of knowledge viz. perception, inference comparison and verbal testimony. Nyaya has given several arguments in order to prove the existence of God. One of them is that atoms themselves are inactive and cannot form different combinations without the motion given by God. Another argument is that the world is an effect and it must have an efficient cause i.e. God. Another argument is that we have to reap the fruit of our actions. Merit and demerit come out of our actions. The stock of merit and demerit is *Adrsta* i.e. the Unseen Power. But this unintelligent Unseen Power requires the guidance of infinitely intelligent God. Sikhism rejects these arguments. For it there is no need to prove the existence of God. It considers God as Truth in the beginning, Truth in the present and Truth in the future.

Purva Mimansa, the fifth Shastra deals with the earlier portion of the Vedas called *Karma Kanda* and does not

assign any place to God. Sikhism is against all formalism and ritualism therefore this Shastra stands rejected.

The last Shastra i.e. *Uttara Mimansa* is also called Vedant. Shankaracharya is the chief exponent of Vedanta, whose philosophic system is known as monism (*Advaita*). According to him, the self or soul is Brahman and Brahman is *Neti Neti* (not this, not this). The *Jiva* or the embodied soul seeks to go beyond *maya*. For this purpose it has to cast off nescience with the help of true knowledge. *Tat Tvam Asi* (Thou Art That) is the major dictum of Shankara. The second important Vedantin after Shankara is Ramanuja, whose system is known as *Vishishtadvaita* or qualified monism. He maintained that Brahman is *Saguna* and thus endowed with Attributes. He responds to our devotion, love and prayer. According to Ramanuja, there are three ultimate realities i.e. God, soul and matter. God is qualified by the souls and the matter is non-dual. When the universe is created, the souls and matter come out of God. The souls are infinite in number. The third important Vedantin is Madhava, whose system is known as *Dvaita* or dualism. It concentrates on the concept of difference (*bheda*). It believes in the reality of the external world. It differentiates between God and soul, soul and soul, God and matter, soul and matter and one material object and another, therefore it is a philosophy of distinctions. According to it, God, souls and the world are equally eternal. For Ramanuja, God is Vishnu-Narayana, who incarnates in different periods in order to reform the lost souls. For Madhava, God is Vishnu, Narayana or Hari.

Soul according to Middle-Eastern Religions

According to Judaism, the soul is the breath of God and like God it is immortal. The universe was created out of nothing by the eternal God by uttering the WORD. Since God is Good, His Creation is also good. There is no devil and no hell. Whosoever goes beyond the Will of the Lord, he commits a sin. Evil springs up when one leaves the godly path and follows his senses. The existence of this evil

is a test for the human being. He has to overcome it by following the Jewish system of human conduct. The name of the Lord is Holy and it must not be uttered in order to protect it from profanation. Man has been given free-will in the choice of the path. The sincere and selfless Prayer takes us near the Lord. Repentance for sins, love for God and service of humanity are necessary for an individual.

According to Christianity, human being is the highest of God's creatures. He has been given absolute freedom, but he constantly abuses it. Consequently, he has to reform himself. God created man in his own image; he is, therefore capable of choosing good, but he becomes a prey constantly to vices. The hell exists for him, who goes against the Will of God and revolts against Him. On the day of judgement, the eternal God will judge the faith and works of each person. Man has fallen because of the original sin. The sinful and guilty can achieve salvation through penitence, faith and love. He has to accept the grace of God in Christ and this will be instrumental in cleansing the dirt of sin. Christ is truly divine and perfect. He has filial consciousness and has undergone resurrection for the sake of humanity. One of the prominent doctrines of Christianity is the doctrine of atonement. Christ is the Saviour and makes atonement for the sins of the people. He lifts humanity and lessens the ignorance of the people. He redeems the human being by his sacrifice.

Islam lays stress on prayer, fasting, alms-giving and pilgrimage to Mecca (*hajj*). The Muslim should pray five times a day under all circumstances and situations. There is a prescribed prayer, which the 'faithful' utters at sunrise, noon, early afternoon, sunset and at the fall of darkness. The 'faithful' has to save himself from the evil power called satan. The fall of Adam and Eve from heaven had been due to this evil Power. The soul is immortal. On the day of resurrection, the dead will rise from their graves in order to receive the rewards and punishments for their actions. The bodies will be formed again from the seed-bone *Al Ajb*, which will not be consumed by the earth like the other parts of the body. On the Day of Judgment, the Prophet will act

as an intercessor. Those with a good record will be sent to heaven and the evil-ones will go to hell. There is a bridge named *Al Sirat* over the abyss of hell. It is finer than a hair and sharper than the edge of a sword. The good will cross the bridge and the evil will fall into the abyss of hell.

According to Sufism, God, the absolute Being, is the only Reality. All beings emanate from Him. He is the real author of the good and evil. He fixes the will of man. By His Grace one attains the spiritual unity with Him. The soul-bird is confined within the body-cage. It is purified by following the path with the help of *murshid* (the religious preceptor), and by remembering the names of God.

Buddhist concept of soul

Buddhism accepts two basic tenets of Hinduism with modifications : the law of *karma* and the doctrine of *samsara*, resulting in continual rebirths. Only those who are burdened with desire, will be re-born. The ignorance is the basic cause of *samsara* (re-birth). The wheel of re-birth depicts destinies for living beings who are trapped in the cycle of desire. The being is thrown and punished in hell. After due punishment, one is born again as a human being. Within the wheel of re-birth, there are several realms e.g. human realm, animal realm and the realms of demigods and gods.

Maya in Hinduism and Sikhism

Maya has been defined in Sikhism as that power which takes us away from God. *Jiva* forgets the Lord because of *maya*. It is not a separate ultimate reality. It has been created by God. The word *maya* is as old as *Rig Veda*, but *mayavada* came into existence with Shankaracharya in the ninth century A.D. Shankara's position is, "*Brahm Satyam Jagan Mithya Jivo Brahmaiva na' parah*" (Brahman is the only reality; the world is an illusion or a false appearance; the individual soul is identical with Brahman). This principle of illusion is known as *maya*. Through this illusion the self believes that it is an individual. This individuality experiences plurality of the names and forms (*nama-rupa*). According to *Guru Granth Sahib*, this illusion of *maya* takes the individual away from God and thus leads him towards transmigration. When the impact of *maya* vanishes, the *Jiva* realises the false appearance of the world.

The world of *maya* is the world of three *gunas* (modes or qualities) i.e. *Rajas* (activity), *Tamas* (morbidly) and *Sattva* (rhythm). When these three qualities are in equilibrium, there is inactivity and the *maya* of the Lord is asleep. When it is the Will of the Lord, the state of the inequilibrium of the qualities begins. The *maya* is then awake and the three powers of the Lord become manifest. Guru Nanak Dev says in *Japu* :

Brahman and *Maya* came into contact and *maya* conceived
Three disciples were born from her.
One is the creator, the other sustainer and the third destroyer,

They work under the direction and orders of Brahman.
He sees them, but they see him not, a wonder of wonders.

The above verses make it clear that Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva are the representatives of three modes. God is said to have two forms, the first as Transcendent (*trigunatita*), dissociated from *maya* and the second as Immanent (*Saguna*), which comes into contact with *maya*.

The power of this *maya*-Shakti (or *Prakriti* according to Sankhya has been portrayed by Guru Arjan Dev in the following manner :

Whosoever loves it (*maya*), is devoured by it,
Whosoever finds comfort in it, is greatly frightened by it,
Because of it, the brothers, friends and relatives quarrel with
each other,
But with the grace of the Guru, I have subdued it.
They saw it thus and fell in love with it, the adepts, ascetics,
gods and men.
Without the preceptor all were beguiled.
Some became stoics, but were sexually hungry,
Some gathered it as householders, but could not own it.
Some became famous as donors, but were much worried by it,
I surrendered myself at the feet of the Guru and was saved by
Hari.
The devout practising penance were misled by it,
The Pundits were subdued through all-conquering greed,
The three *gunas* (qualities) and heaven are misled by it,
I was saved by the grace of the Guru.
It is subdued by the person with True knowledge.
It prays to him with folded hands : "I shall do whatever you
bid me."
But the true disciple does not come near it.

(Asa M. 5, p. 370)

Guru Amar Das has thus defined *maya* :

"This is *maya* which makes us forget the Lord, the *moha*
(attachment) is created and one is bound by duality."

(Ramkali M. 3, Anand, p. 921)

In the Sikh scripture, the word *maya* has been used for wealth also. This *maya* is like counterfeit merchandise, which when put to test, loses all its value. When it slips

away, the body loses its brightness. It is fickle, but it is very beautiful and lustrous that everybody is attracted towards it. It is a temporary phase and the honour gained through it is also temporary. (Asa M. 3, p. 429).

The concept of *Maya* is only the Hindu concept which influenced the thought-content of the Sikh Gurus. Other major religions do not have this concept.

Creation in Sikhism

Guru Nanak Dev has described Brahman (God) as the Creator (*Karta Purakh*) in the *Mool Mantra*. He creates, therefore, He is the Cause, the Origin of the creation. In *Japu*, He has been mentioned as the Spouse of *Maya*, the female principle and through her the Creator of three disciples i.e. Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva. He is the wielder of the three powers of creation, preservation and destruction represented by the above-mentioned three gods respectively.

Sikh Cosmogony (Birth of the Cosmos)

The Guru says that for millions of years, there was darkness all around. There was neither earth nor sky, neither day nor night, neither sun nor moon. Only God Himself was there in Abstract Meditation. When it was His Will, He created the universe and stretched the wide expanse without prop. He created Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva and augmented the attachment of *Maya*. (Maru M.1, p. 1035). The religious leaders who tried to fix the time of creation have been plainly told by the Guru that the Pundits could not know the time. If they had known it, it must have been mentioned in the Puranas. The Qadis could not know the time. If they had known it, the Muslim scriptures must have mentioned it. The Yogi did not know the time, the lunar date, the date, the month and the season. The Creator who creates the universe, alone knows the time of creation.

(Japu, p. 4). The innumerable flood-gates of life were opened by the Divine Will, after a long span of abstract meditation by the Lord. The Pauranic measurement of this span is thirty-six Yugas (ages). (Var Ramkali M. 3, p. 949). In this period, there was darkness everywhere. The question arises as to the process of creation. In *Japu* the Guru has said, "The wide expanse was created with ONE UTTERANCE and lakhs of rivers of life began to flow." (Japu, p. 3). On the face of it, this idea resembles the Muslim concept of creation, but 'one utterance' or one sound is the *Sabda*, which is a *tanmatra* of *akash*, from which the other gross evolutes came into being. Air is an evolute from *akash*, fire is the evolute from air, water is the evolute from fire and finally the earth is the evolute from water. This is the process of creation. The Guru says, "From the True Lord, the air took birth, the water from the air and all the three worlds from the water, with the light of the Lord in everything." (Sri Raga M. 1, p. 19).

This idea is contained in a couplet in Sri Raga, wherein the whole process could not be related. The Guru mentioned this Sankhyan theory very briefly in the couplet. The Pauranic idea of the creation of the earth and the sky from the shells of the eggs of Brahma has also been given by the Guru in order to convey his view that the Creator in fact, is only Brahman and none other. (Bilawal M. 1, p. 839).

In the concluding Shloka of *Japu*, the Guru relates the play of the gross elements in the following manner : "The air is the preceptor; the water is the male parent; the earth is the female parent; *Mahat* or consciousness joins them; the day and night are the male and female nurses; in this way the world plays on." (Japu, p. 8). Such is the constitution of the creation, in which the grosser elements play a significant part. The *akash* and fire could not be included in this couplet as in the previous one, but their part is also no less significant. The foremost part in the creation is that of water which gives life to all sorts of *Jivas*. (Var Asa M. 1, p. 472). When the Yogis of his time questioned the Guru about the

origin of creation. He replied that the world takes its birth in ego. (Siddh Goshta, p. 946). This thought is again Sankhyan. With the union of *Purusha* and *Prakriti*, *Mahat* (*Buddhi*) is born. From *Buddhi*, *Ahamkara* or ego takes its birth and *Ahamkara* further gives birth to Devas' mind, five senses, five sense organs, five *tanmatras* (subtle elements) and five gross elements. Twenty-one principles spring from *Ahamkara* comprising both the subtle world and the gross world of five elements. In *Asa Ki Var*, the Guru says, "The *Jiva* comes in ego, goes in ego, takes its birth in ego, dies in ego, gives in ego, takes in ego, earns in ego, loses in ego..." (Var Asa M. 1, p. 466). All the activities of the *Jiva* from birth till death emerge from ego.

The world is said to have been born from *Shunyata*. The word *Shunya* is from Buddhist philosophical terminology. *Shunyavada* is an important school of Buddhism. Ordinarily, *Shunya* means 'a zero', 'empty void' or 'nothing', but the *Madhyamikas* use it in a different philosophical sense. According to them it means "Indescribable" (*Anirvachani*). Brahman is *Shunya*, because it cannot be adequately described by any category of intellect. The world is *Shunya*, because it is neither existent nor non-existent. In this sense everything is *Shunya*. The word *Shunya* has been used by Guru Nanak in his poetry for both Brahman and the world. The Guru says that before the creation, Brahman was in Abstract Meditation. He, the Unfathomable, was absorbed in Himself. He created and saw His Own *Qudrat* (Nature). *Shunya* was created from *Shunyata*. Air and water were created from *Shunya*. The Power of creation was in *Shunya*. etc. (Maru M. 1, p. 1037). Guru Nanak has used the word *Shunya* in the same sense of 'Indescribable', in which the *Madhyamikas* have used this word.

There are some passages in the poetry of Guru Nanak, which state that the world has been born under the *Hukm* (Will) of the Lord. He says in *Japu* that everything is under the *Hukm* of the Lord and none out of it. (*Japu*, p. 1). Thus the origin of the universe is due to the Divine Will of the Creator; His *Hukm* is Supreme. He is the Creator of *Purusha*

and *Prakriti* both and of *Mahat* and *Ahamkara* and their evolutes. The sole cause of the Origin of the Universe is *Para-Brahma*, Who was in Abstract Meditation or *Shunyata* before the creation; and when it was His Will, He as *Lower Brahman* or *Ishvara* or *Shunya* created the universe. No time or date of the creation can be fixed. The creation has a beginning, but the Creator is without any beginning. The creation has been termed as the *lila* or sport of the Lord, Who is not a Spectator from a distance, but He is Immanent. He is within His creation and pervades it everywhere.

Sikh Cosmology

The question arises about the extent of creation. Broadly speaking, there are three worlds i.e. the sky, the earth and the nether-world. Our earth has been called *Mat-lok* or *Mrita-loka* i.e. the region of death. The sky is also called *Svarga* or heaven. The Hindus believe in *Chaudah Bhavan* and the Muslims believe in *Chaudah Tabak*. They hold that there are seven skies or upper planes and seven planes in the nether-world. The Guru said, "There are lakhs of nether-worlds and lakhs of skies...The Lord is Great. He alone knows His Greatness." (Japu, p. 5). Modern scientists like Hoyle and Gold believe that the universe is expanding and with regard to time and space it is infinite. The same view was held by Guru Nanak centuries earlier. He was against the idea of delimiting the creation of the Infinite Lord. He believed in evolution and did not believe in the idea that the whole universe was created at one particular moment.

Guru Nanak has talked of five planes, whose physical interpretation forms part of Cosmology, moral interpretation forms part of Ethics and spiritual interpretation forms part of Mysticism. The order of the planes is the plane of piety, the plane of knowledge, the plane of effort, the plane of grace and the plane of truth. Our earth is the plane of piety (*Dharam Khand*). When we rise above the earth, we pass through different planets and spheres in the plane of

knowledge (*Gyan Khand*). When we rise above to the plane of effort (*Saram Khand*), the creation becomes subtle and beautiful. In the plane of grace (*Karam Khand*) there are abodes of saints who are always absorbed in whole-hearted devotion to the Lord. The final plane of Truth (*Sach Khand*) exhibits the infinite creation of the Infinite Lord. From the first to the fifth plane, we are conscious of the physical dimensions, both finite and Infinite, which shows that these planes exist physically. The moral and the spiritual interpretations of these planes remind us of the journey and the goal of the seeker. In order to rise from the plane of Piety to the plane of Truth, the seeker has to seek knowledge and make efforts to obtain the Grace of the Lord. Truth can only be achieved by becoming pious, seeking knowledge of the path from the Guru, by following the path by the Grace of the Guru and God both. Truth can be realised by a balanced combination of *Karma* (efforts for piety), *Bhakti* (devotion by Grace) and *Gyan* (knowledge). Truth is God. In order to realise God, the spirit has to travel incessantly through the spiritual planes inwardly. Macrocosm (*Brahmand*) is present in the microcosm (*Pind*). Whatever is inward is also outward and whatever is outward is also inward. The planes are the spiritual planes through which the spirit rises during its ascent. As the soul ascends, the body becomes subtle gradually and vanishes when it reaches the plane of Truth, where the formless soul merges in the Formless God.

A closer examination of these five planes reveals that the Infinite Lord has Created the infinite creation. Brahmas, Vishnus and Shivas are innumerable and they all work under the direction of the Lord. Each solar system has its own Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva. It means that the powers of creation, preservation and destruction work in every sphere of creation. We know only of four divisions of creation i.e. *Andaja* (the creation from eggs), *Jeraja* (the creation of animals), *Svetaja* (the creation from heat and moisture) and *Udibhuj* (vegetation). The Guru talks of innumerable divisions of creation. The whole created world is *Qudrat* (nature) of *Qadir* (the Creator). There are innumer-

able species of different names and colours in our world. All the forces of nature are moving in the fear of the Lord. All the created things work in wonder. The *Hukm* or the Cosmic law of the Lord works everywhere. There is no mythological Bull which carries the earth on its head.

The non-temporal and non-spatial Lord has created the world of time and space. The change is the spice of life. After the span of life, death is a 'must'. The *Jiva*, according to its actions, changes its shape and surroundings. It may move from country to country, planet to planet, from plane to plane and from sphere to sphere. There are eighty-four lakhs of *yonis* in our world, the human being is the most superior of all. He may fall to the lower plane of animals and even rise to the higher planes, where it can become a god. The world of time and space or the ocean of *samsara* can be crossed by following the required discipline enunciated by the Guru-soul. Whatever has been created, is prone to death. The old worlds die and new ones rise in their place. There was a time when there was only ONE LORD and there will be a time when there will be only ONE LORD. The cycle of creation and dissolution goes on. The *Utpati* (creation) is followed by *pralaya* (dissolution). It all happens under the Divine Will.

The world is not everlasting, therefore it is called false (*Mithya*, *Kur*). Only the Lord is True or Ever-Existent. This has led to the thought that there is nothing except the Lord and the world is only a deception and illusion. While emphasising the transitory aspect of the world (*Jagat*, *Samsara*), the Guru has rejected the idea of illusion. For him, the world is the abode of the Lord. Since the lord is true, the world is also relatively true. He says, "O Lord ! Thy regions are real, thy universes are real, Thy planets are real and Thy creations are real." (Var Asa M. 1, p. 463)

The Concept of Creation and Hinduism

In the above discussion regarding the concept of creation and Sikhism, we have noticed the impact of Hinduism. But the subject needs further elucidation. The

earliest description of the state before creation, is contained in the *Nasadiya Sukta* of *Rig Veda*. It is known as the hymn of creation. It is very similar to the hymn of creation composed by Guru Nanak in *Raga Maru*. The same idea has been expressed in the twenty-first canto of *Sukhmani*. We find that the Vedic hymn expresses some doubt about the creative activity of Brahman, but the Sikh scripture is very positive about it. There have been speculations about the time when the universe was created. The Pauranic division of Yugas (ages) is frequently mentioned in *Guru Granth Sahib*. The state of darkness before the creation is described to have lasted for thirty-six Yugas.

Regarding the process of creation, Ramanuja accepts the Upanishadic account of creation literally. He believes that the manifold world has been created by God out of Himself by a Gracious Act of His Will. The unconscious matter and the finite selves existed in Him before the creation. Guru Arjan Dev takes a similar view about the creation. (Gauri Sukhmani M. 5, p. 293). The concept of *Purusha* and *Prakriti*, which occurs in the Sikh scripture, is the Sankhyan concept. The thought that the world was born out of *Ahamkar* is also Sankhyan. There are many similarities regarding the concept of Brahman between *Guru-bani* of the *Adi Granth* and the *Brahm-bani* of the Upanishads. The dualism of Sankhya has been rejected by the Sikh Gurus, who believe the both *Purusha* and *Prakriti* have been created by the Lord-God. Similarly, the gods, goddesses and incarnation of Hinduism have been rejected by the Gurus and radical saints whose hymns have been included in the Sikh scripture. The Hindu idea of seven skies (heavens) and nether-worlds also stands rejected. The creation of the limitless Lord cannot be delimited. The ideas of the four divisions of creation (*Khanis*) and eighty-four lakhs of species are found in various hymns of the scripture.

Three Principal Hindu Theories of Creation

The three principal Hindu theories of creation are *Arambhvada*, *Parinamvada* and *Vivartavada*. The first theory

i.e. *Arambhavada* has been put forth by Vaisheshika and Nyaya Shastras. It is also known as *Asatkaryavada*, which signifies that the effect does not pre-exist in its cause. The effect is quite a new beginning. It is quite a fresh creation. According to this theory, all physical things are produced by the combination of atoms. There is no direct reference to this theory in the Sikh scripture except a couplet in *Sahaskriti Shlokas*, in which it is written, "The atom being subtle travels through the sky, continents, worlds and regions and goes in the twinkling of an eye, but the emancipation cannot be obtained without the saint."

The second theory of creation i.e. *Parinamavada* belongs to Sankhya and Yoga Shastras. It is also known as *Satkaryavada*. According to this theory, all the material effects are the modification of *Prakriti*. They pre-exist within the eternal *Prakriti* and at the time of creation come out of it and at the time of dissolution, they return to it. *Guru Granth Sahib* rejects the eternality of *Prakriti*. Only Brahman has been recognised as Eternal, Omnipresent and Omnipotent; otherwise *Prakriti* and its evolutes have been accepted in the Sikh scripture.

The third theory of creation i.e. *Vivartavada* has been put forward by Shankaracharya. According to this theory, the world is only a phenomenal appearance of Brahman. It is neither a real creation by Brahman nor a real modification of Brahman. The world only appears to us due to ignorance (*avidya*) and this creation is real only as long as *avidya* lasts. But Ramanuja, another exponent of Vedanta after Shankaracharya, holds that the creation is relatively real. The world and the selves are as real as Brahman Himself. His theory is known as *Brahma-parinamavada*, because according to his theory the whole universe including the material world and the individual selves is a real modification of Brahman. God neither creates the matter and soul nor destroys them. The law of *Karma* necessitates creation. But the Will of God is Supreme. The creation and the dissolution of the world are His *Lila* or sport. Ramanuja believes in *Prakriti* like Sankhya, but according to him, it is

absolutely dependent on God. It is controlled by God from within just as body is controlled by soul from within. The Sikh scripture, like Ramanuja, holds that the world is real. In the words of Guru Nanak, "The regions, universes, worlds and physical formations are all real." (Var Asa M. 1, p. 463). The theory of creation of the Sikh scripture is very close to *Brahma-parinamavada*. The macrocosm is reflected in microcosm and one proclaims in wonder : WAHU ! WAHU ! WAHU !

Concept of Creation in Buddhism

According to Buddhism, there are six realms of the universe, which are inhabited by individuals on account of their *karmas* (actions) performed in their previous lives. There are three upper realms for *devas* (gods), *asuras* (those who are opposed to gods) and the human beings. The three lower realms are for animals, *pretas* (ghosts) and hell-beings. Each of these realms has its particular quality. The *devas* are the highest beings, and are the liberated ones. The *asuras* reside in the next realm, where they are busy in raising their stature. The human beings can achieve liberation by following the path enunciated by Buddha. The animals are devoid of sensibility. The *Prêtas* live a life of frustration and hell-beings are always in suffering.

Concept of Creation in Judaism, Christianity and Islam

Judaism is the mother religion for Christianity and Islam. Their concept of creation is the same, which is contained in *Genesis*, the first Book of the *Bible*. The story of creation given in this Book manifests *Behovah* (God) in action. He creates because He Wills. On His Command everything comes into being. He creates the heaven and the earth, separates the light from the darkness and creates day and night, creates the dome of the sky to separate one body of water from the other, thus bringing into being the sky and the seas, creates vegetation on the earth, creates sun, moon and stars, creates living creatures in the water, in the

air and on the ground and created the man in His Own Image. This whole creation came into being in six days. The *day* mentioned in respect of creation may not be misunderstood for the days experienced by human beings. A day of the Lord is an epoch which may be much larger than the day of Brahma, described in Hindu Shastras. If we take into consideration such epochs, we can well appreciate the period during the evolutionary process. There have been speculations about the extent of the universe. Ptolemy believes in one thing and Copernicus in another. Christianity and Islam talk of fourteen regions, seven upper and seven nether.

Karma and Transmigration

Sikhism and Hinduism

Karma means action. Every *Jiva* desires, thinks and acts. Every action has its association in the past, present and future. Every action is like a seed sown in the field of body. (Sri Raga M. 5, p. 78). The soul is the farmer. It has been given a field in the form of a body. When the seed of action is sown, the consequences must follow. A *Jiva* repeatedly experiences births in this world because of his actions. The theory of *Karma* can be explained as the moral law of causation.

Karmas may be good or bad, virtuous or sinful. The remuneration of these *Karmas* depends on their quality. Whatever one did in his previous births, that makes his present life. Whatever the seed of actions is sown in the field of body, the harvest is reaped accordingly. As one sows, so shall he reap. (Baramaha Majh M. 5, p. 134). It is futile to slander others for the actions done. The fault lies in one's own actions. (Asa Patti M. 1, p. 433). Good actions not only bring the appreciation in this world, but also in the presence of the Lord. (Asa M. 5, p. 397). Bad actions lead toward misery. (Sri Raga M. 1, p. 15). Bad actions are like a field of poison. (Majh M. 5, p. 105). A bad person is like a thief. He is punished by the god of Justice. (Gauri M. 5, p. 194). The slander of good people and the worship of the followers of mammon are considered as bad actions. (Dhanasari M. 5, p. 673). One should do such actions by

which he may not feel ashamed in the presence of the Lord. (Shalok Farid, p. 1381).

These *Karmas* are done according to the Will of God. God has destined us from the very beginning for certain *Karmas*. We cannot escape them. (Ramkali M. 1, Dakhni Oamkar, p. 937). At this point a question arises, why should one be rewarded or punished, when one is not responsible for the actions? But a closer consideration of this line of thought brings us to the conclusion that the saint-poets of the *Adi Granth* could not detach the *Karma* doctrine from God, as was done by Jaimini, the author of *Purva-Mimansa*. Kabir says :

This *Jiva* is tied by *Karmas*, you say,
But who gave life to *Karmas* ?

(Gaund Kabir, p. 870)

It is Brahman who controls our *Karmas*. This does not mean that we ought to remain passive, because we have been denied even an iota of free-will. In order to rise higher on the spiritual planes, one must get himself attuned to the Will of God. (Shalok Farid, p. 1383). The human being desires, thinks and acts for worldly pleasures, which end in misery. (Var Asa M. 1, 469). In fact, God has given us good amount of free-will under His Will and those who act according to the Will of God, realise the State of Bliss. Others who are world-wise undergo births and deaths. The wisdom of an individual is of no use. (Gujri M. 5, p. 496). Everything happens under the Will of God. The attainment of the Nectar of Name is the real ideal under the Will of God. (Basant M. 3, p. 1172). The individual can act freely for the attainment of this ideal, therefore great stress has been laid on fortitude, which forms the basis of the Grace of the Lord.

The *Karmas* done under the influence of *maya* and ego are the cause of transmigration. Without the attainment of the Name of the Lord, the cycle of births and deaths continues. There are innumerable individual selves taking different physical forms. The words virtue and sin and

heaven and hell come in usage after the creation of the world of three *gunas* (i.e. *maya*). (Gauri Sukhmani M. 5, p. 291). The virtuous go to heaven and the sinners to hell. The true disciple has no desire of going to heaven. He does not fear hell. (Gauri Kabir, p. 337). He is above virtue and sin, therefore he is above heaven and hell. Kabir says :

Which is the hell and which poor heaven ?

The saints condemn both,

We have nothing to do with any by the Grace of our Guru.

(*Ramkali Kabir, p. 969*)

The saint, who is above heaven and hell, wishes to remain at the feet of the Lord for all times. (Shalok Kabir, p. 1370).

Thus we see that heaven is not an ideal for a Sikh. The picture of hell has been depicted in the following manner :

There is a stream of fire from which emerge poisonous flames,

There is none else there except the self,

The waves of the ocean of fire are aflame,

And the sinners are being burnt in them.

(*Maru M. 1, p. 1026*)

All the physical forms through which the soul passes, are hell. Thus there are eighty-four lakhs of hells, where the sinners get due punishment for their deeds. The angels of death take away the sinner before the god of Justice, who is depicted as money-lender (*Bania*). The scribes Chitra and Gupta are asked to give an account of the virtuous and sinful acts respectively. Then the god of Justice sends the sinners to hell. Before reaching the god of Justice, the sinner has to pay toll-tax in the way. The description of hell, god of Justice, Chitra Gupta etc. is Pauranic through which the saint-poets of the *Adi Granth* wanted to create the hatred in the minds of the individuals against bad deeds and inculcate in them the devotion of the Lord, making it quite clear, that even good works could not get the release of the individual self.

The theories of *Karma* and Transmigration are inter-linked. All the orthodox and heterodox Indian religions

except *Lokayats* (*Charvakas*) believed in these doctrines. The orthodox faiths are the six systems of Hindu Philosophy, which accept the authority of the Vedas. The heterodox faiths which do not accept the authority of the Vedas are Jainism and Buddhism. The old Egyptians and Greeks also accepted the theories of *Karma* and Transmigration. The modern Theosophists have full faith in them. Some people believe that the soul existing from the very beginning takes birth in the world only once. This is the doctrine of pre-existence. Others are of the view that the soul takes birth repeatedly, but is only born as a human being and is never born as a bird or beast. This is the doctrine of re-incarnation. But according to the doctrine of transmigration, the soul takes various physical forms according to its *Karmas*. The Indian sages talk of eighty-four lakhs of physical forms. Half of them live in water and the other half on land. (Asa Namdev, p. 485). In one of his hymns, Guru Arjan Dev has described the various births of a soul :

The *Jiva* was born several times as worm and flying insect,
 It was born several times as an elephant, a fish and a deer,
 It was born several times as a bird and a snake,
 It was born several times as a horse and a yoked bull,
 Meet the Lord, this is the opportune time,
 After a very long time, you have come in this body,
 It was born several times as a stone and a mountain,
 It was born several times as germs,
 It was born several times as plants,
 It strayed into eighty-four lakhs of physical forms.

(Gauri Guareri M. 5, p. 176)

Jiva experiences bondage, when it enters the field of actions. Every action enchains him further. (Maru M. 5, p. 1004). It tightens the noose around his neck. (Maru M. 5, p. 1004). There are three kinds of *Karmas* : *Sanchit*, *Prarabdha* and *Kriyaman* (or *Agami*). The *Karma*, which is ripe for reaping is called *Prarabdha*. The accumulated *Karmas* of the past are *Sanchit* and the *Karma* which is being created now is *Kriyaman* or *Agami*. The *Prarabdha Karma* cannot be avoided. *Sanchit Karmas* manifest themselves in the form of character. The chain of births and deaths ceases only on the

exhaustion of the *Prarabdha Karmas*. The tie that binds *Jiva* to the wheel of births and deaths is desire. In *Brhadarnayaka Upanishad* it is written, "When all the desires, concealed in the heart, come to an end, the mortal becomes immortal and enjoys Brahman here."

Transmigration ceases with the exhaustion of desire. But the desire or *Trishna* comes to an end, when we meet the knower of Brahman (*Brahm-Gyani*) and act according to his instructions :

The fear of births and deaths ceases with the Perfect Knowledge
imparted by the Perfect Man

We stray no more, our wanderings cease, on listening to the
Praises of the Lord, saith Nanak.

(*Gauri Sukhmani M. 5, p. 287*)

Trilochan, the Maharashtrian saint has said that the final desire at the time of death becomes a basis for our next birth. Whosoever remembers his sons at the time of death, becomes a pig. The person who thinks of his houses becomes a ghost. The one who thinks of wealth becomes a snake. Whosoever remembers a woman, becomes a harlot. (Gujri Trilochan, p. 526). This shows that a man may become a beast, a crawling snake or a woman in his next birth according to his *Karmas*.

Buddhism and the concept of Karma and Transmigration

As has been said above, the Hindu theories of *Karma* and Transmigration have been accepted by the heterodox faiths like Jainism and Buddhism. Sikhism also accepts these theories. But Buddhism has accepted the theories with some modifications. As regards the law of *Karma*, Buddha believed that if an individual altered his ways, he experienced a change of heart that resulted in new objectives and new directions. Those who remained burdened with *Trishna* (desire) experienced re-birth. According to Hinduism, the soul travels from one body to another, but in the case of Buddhism, it is a man's character that goes on. Buddhism does not teach that the souls transmigrate. It is only the transmigration of character. The re-incarnation

of Buddhism is the continual transmission of impulses. The greatest necessity in Buddhism lies in the 'right effort'.

Rejection of the Theories of Karma and Transmigration by Judaism, Christianity and Islam

Orthodox Judaism teaches that the soul continues to exist after death and on the last day of Judgment, it will be restored to the body for final judgment. Reformed Judaism rejects the idea of the resurrection of the body. It believes that the human soul continues to live on in another dimension after the physical death. There are several Jews who do not believe in the survival of the soul after death. There are, however, a few Jews, who hope for a heavenly reward. Christianity and Islam strongly believe in the survival of the soul after death. On the last day of Judgment, there will be the restoration of the body for the final judgment. Therefore the theories of *Karma* and Transmigration stand rejected in Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

Rituals, Sacraments and Ceremonies

Sikhism and Hinduism

There are no religious rituals, ceremonies and sacraments in Sikhism. The Sikh Gurus have rejected the performance of all kinds of works, which result in ego and duality. For them all those actions are commendable which help us in the realisation of our Ultimate Objective i.e. the Union with the Lord. Guru Arjan Dev says :

All the other rites or works are useless except those about *Hari*.
(*Gauri M. 5, p. 216*)

In Hinduism, great emphasis is laid on the performance of rites and ceremonies, which are considered necessary for advancement in spiritual domain. The equivalent for the word 'rite' in Sanskrit is *Kriya*, which has been used by Guru Arjan Dev in the above-quoted verse. The Vedas are divided into four parts viz. Mantras, Brahmanas, Aranyakas and Upanishads. The Mantras and Brahmanas together are known as *Karma-kanda* (the parts of the Vedas dealing with sacrificial actions), Aranyakas are called *Upashana-kanda* (dealing with the actions pertaining to worship) and Upanishads are called *Gyan-kanda* (dealing with knowledge). The actions pertaining to sacrifices and worship are all *Kriyas*, therefore they are rejected by the Sikh Gurus. Guru Arjan Dev elaborates his thoughts in the following manner :

All the rites pertaining to lip-recitation, austerity and self-mortification performed here are robbed off their merit

nearby (in this world);

He does not obtain even a shell by fasting, daily observances and austerities;

The conduct hereafter is quite different, where such actions are of no avail.

He who bathes at the pilgrim-stations and wanders over the earth, gets no place of rest hereafter;

The procedure here is of no use there, by this he only pleases the people.

One does not obtain the abode of the Lord hereafter by reciting the four Vedas from memory;

Whatever he talks is all non-sense, if he does not comprehend the Pure Name.

(Gauri M. 5, p. 216)

Grihya-Sutras contain description of Hindi sacraments (*Samskaras*) which start from the impregnation of the wife (*Garbhadhan Samskara*) and proceed towards the birth of the child (*Janam-Samskara*) naming of the child (*Nam-Samskara*) investiture with the sacred thread (*upanayana samskara*), the marriage (*vivaha samskara*) and finally the death (*dah samskara*). The rites pertaining to all the sacraments have been decried by the Sikh Gurus. The ceremony of investiture of the sacred thread has been brought under serious criticism by Guru Nanak Dev in his great composition "Asa Ki Var" (page 471). Kabir is very critical of the *Shraaddha* rite :

When the manes are alive, no one gives due respect to them,
but when they are dead, he observes *shraaddha* by arranging a feast,

What and how will the poor manes obtain, when the victuals are eaten up by crows and dogs.

(Gauri Bairagan Kabir, p. 332)

There are many other rites for various occasions and festivals. There are several *nitya* (for daily observance) and *naimittika* (obligatory) *Karmas*, but the attitude of Sikhism towards such *Karmas* can be summed up in the following verse of Guru Nanak Dev :

I am always a sacrifice to them, Whose religious rites consist only in Truth and True Name.

(Asa M. 1, p. 353)

The rites regarding ceremonial worship in Hinduism are twofold. The one, based on the Vedas, is expounded by Jaimini in *Purva-Mimansa* and elaborated in *Kalpa-Sutras* and the second is based on *Agamas*, which is mainly concerned with the adoration of idols and varies with the individual Bhakti cults. The *havana* (*homa*) is performed with sacrificial offerings, the sacred text is recited, the mantras are repeated along with meditation. The flowers water mixed with perfume etc., incense (*dhupa*), lighted lamp (*dipa*) etc. are used during worship. The general populace observes such a worship. But there is also the highest form of devotion, which is the worship of Transcendental Lord (*Nirguna*). It is based on the realisation of the identity of the self with Brahman. Such worship is very rare. The Sikh Gurus and the radical-saints have propagated this type of devotion.

Buddhism

Two major sects of Buddhism are *Hinayana* (Lesser Vehicle or Theravada Buddhism) and *Mahayana* (Greater Vehicle). The Buddhist neither believes in the life of pleasure nor in the life of mortification. For him the middle path brings enlightenment. Therefore his life is very simple and not a life of much involvement. The monks do not rely heavily on symbols or rituals. Their possessions are very few and their altars are very simple. Gradually several other schools arose in Buddhism and image-worship became prevalent. About the end of the sixth century A.D., Tantrism influenced Buddhism. In the next three-four centuries a new school of magic circles developed, which is known as *Mantrayana* (The Spell Vehicle). Later on *Mantrayana* developed into new schools called *Kalachakrayana*, *Vajrayana* (The Thunderbolt Vehicle) and *Sahajayana*. Jainism contains extreme type of *Kriyavada*, hence it stands rejected.

Judaism

The rite of circumcision is supposed to take place, when

the newly-born boy is eight days old. Most Jewish children are given both a Hebrew name and a secular one. There is an additional ceremony when a first-born son is thirty days old. This is called 'redemption of the first-born'. On his thirteenth birthday, the boy automatically becomes the 'son of the commandments'. It becomes obligatory for him to observe the ethical and ritual teachings of the religion. The marriage ceremony is preceded by the signing of the marriage contract. Orthodox Judaism encourages the practice of family-purity. On his death, a Jew is buried. The relatives mourn the death in a ritual way. After burial, the mourners return home to the 'meal of recovery' which consists of bread and hard-boiled eggs. A candle is kindled which is to be kept burning for seven days. The formal mourning ends after thirty days. In the life of a Jew, Sabbath is the most important day. There are some dietary restrictions for a Jew. The types of animals that a Jew may eat, are specified. The mixing of any milk product with any meat product at the same meal is prohibited. The law forbids the eating of the meat of a pig.

Christianity

The Christian church gives prominence to the sacraments. The Roman Catholic Church recognises seven sacraments. Two of these sacraments are considered as obligatory by nearly all the Christians. They are the sacrament of baptism and the sacrament of Eucharist. The first sacrament is the initiation and purification ceremony and the second sacrament is the symbol of eternal sacrifice. The first sacrament is performed once in a lifetime and the second one is performed daily. Water is used in the first sacrament and bread and wine in the second. The bread is the symbol for food and body and wine for blood. While taking both these articles, the worshipper is supposed to partake the body and blood of Christ i.e. the nature and life of Christ. In this way he becomes one with Him. Out of the five remaining sacraments of Roman Catholics, is the sacrament of marriage. The material used in this sacrament

is the ring and the sacrament is performed in the name of the father and the son and of the Holy Ghost. One of the doctrines of Christianity is the doctrine of last things. At the end of the world, there will be the judgment. The blessed will be sent to heaven and the damned to hell.

Islam

The principal rites of the Muslims are the *Hajj* i.e. the pilgrimage to Mecca, the daily five-time prayer, the fasting (*roza*) and the marriage and funeral ceremonies. Guru Nanak Dev says :

Make mercy thy mosque and faith thy prayer-mat,
Whatever is just and lawful, let it be thy Quran,
Make modesty thy circumcision and character thy fast,
Be a Muslim in this way.

(*Majh Ki Var M. 1, p. 140*)

There are five prayers and five times
and all have different names,
The first is Truth, the second honest earning
and the third is charity in God's Name,
The fourth is the purity of intention in mind
and the fifth is the Praises of the Lord.

(*Majh Ki Var M. 1, p. 141*)

Thus the ritualism and formalism in Islam has been decried in Sikhism like Hinduism, and other faiths. Sikhism accepts only the basic traits, qualities and virtues, which can raise spiritual state of the individual. In this sense, there are no rituals and formal ceremonies which must be performed by a Sikh. Sikhism is a priestless religion. A Sikh is a householder-saint. The male and female Sikh both have to look after the upkeep of the house and the welfare of the family.

The Religious and Secular Duties of a Sikh

Being a householder, the Sikh has twin duties to perform, the religious as well as secular. But these secular duties very often verge on the divine border, because in

every work, the Sikh seeks the divine grace. He gets up early in the morning and after taking his bath, he mutters his prayers and remembers the Name of the Lord. He attends the holy congregation and pays his obeissance to his Guru and listens to the divine music chanted in the Gurdwara. While performing his worldly duties during the day, he follows the injunctions of his preceptor in mind, speech and deed. He also repeats his evening and bed-time prayers. All his obligatory duties regarding his family and Sikh brotherhood, are performed in the presence of the living Guru i.e. *Guru Granth Sahib*. For naming a child, the first letter of the hymn, read from the scripture, is used. For the performance of the marriage-ceremony, the couple circumambulates *Guru Granth Sahib* four times as the four stanzas of the prescribed hymns are sung. The funeral ceremony is performed by reading the *Ramkali Sadd* from the scripture. There are two broad divisions of the Sikhs i.e. *Sahjdharis* or easygoing Sikhs (those who do not wear long hair) and the *Keshadhari* Sikhs or Singhs or Khalsa (those who wear long hair and follow a special discipline). A Sikh becomes a Singh or Khalsa after under-going the initiation ceremony, which is called *Amrit Chhakna* (the drinking of the holy nectar). The Khalsa has to wear five Ks i.e. *Kesh* (long hair), *Kangha* (the comb), *Kachh* (the underwear), *Kara* (the iron bangle) and *Kripan* (the sword). There are four taboos for him i.e. he has not to remove hair from any part of his body, he should never eat *halal* (the meat prepared by the Muslim method), he should never commit adultery and he should never use tobacco in any form. A Sikh who confesses before the congregation for any of his lapses, has to undergo some punishment for his offence. A Sikh prays at all times for the welfare of all the humanity.

Hukm (God's Will or Command)

Sikhism and Islam

Hukm is an Arabic word, which means Order or Judgment of God, Prophet, Ruler or a Judge. In the *Quran*, it pertains to the Order or Judgment of God. In Muslim Theology it includes the Order of the Prophet as well. With the advent of Muslims, this word was adopted by the Sikh Gurus. Guru Nanak Dev has defined *Hukm* in a stanza of *Japu* in this way :

By Thy *Hukm* (Will), the world of matter came into existence,
 Thy *Hukm*, O Lord, is Inexpressible,
 By Thy *Hukm*, the *Jivas* are created,
 By Thy *Hukm*, they get distinction,
 By Thy *Hukm*, they are good or bad,
 By Thy *Hukm*, their destiny of joys and sorrows is scribed,
 By Thy *Hukm*, some get Thy benefaction,
 By Thy *Hukm*, some always lead life of misery,
 Everybody is under Thy *Hukm*,
 There is none outside it.
 Whosoever realises the significance of This *Hukm*,
 He never talks in ego.

(*Japu*, p. 1)

The above verses give us a glimpse of the *Hukm* of God. This *Hukm* is an over-all Will or Command of the Lord. This Will is a set of commandments or a set of the Laws of God. These Laws are True for all times and work in all the three fields i.e. physical, moral and spiritual. All the creatures in the world are bound by these Laws.

The Arabic-English Lexicon by William Edward Lane gives the following meaning of *Hukm*: "Prevention or restraint; judgment or judicial decision; a judgment respecting a thing that it is such a thing, or is not such a thing, whether it be necessarily connected with another thing or not; restrain of a man from wrong doing; profitable discourse such as restrains from and forbids ignorant and silly behaviour; the exercise of judicial authority, jurisdiction, rule, dominion or government, an ordinance, a statute, a prescript, an edict, a degree or a particular law; custom or usage; predicament; also knowledge or law in the matters of religion."

The word 'Sultan' (sovereign, king) has often been used in the verses of Guru Nanak Dev. Like a Sovereign and Supreme Commander, the *Hukm* (Order/Command) of God Prevails. Though the worldly kings claimed 'Divine Right', they were not divine and their rule was not everlasting like the Authority and Suzerainty of God. He is the True Sovereign with True *Hukm*, and this idea worked as a great consolation for the suppressed Indian masses. Unlike the worldly kings, their Sovereign (God) was full of Benevolence and Kindness. Their devotion towards God was, thus, a combination of profound veneration and holy awe, which grew into an ardent and passionate love for the Lord. The Sikh Gurus specially selected the word *Hukm* from the foreign language and chiselled it conceptually and made it an appropriate tool for their religious philosophy. Guru Nanak Dev says, "O Lord ! the magnitude of Thy *Hukm* cannot be known; none can write about it. Even a hundred poets in unison cannot describe an iota of it. None has been able to evaluate it, They only say whatever they hear (from others)... He does not consult anybody whenever He Creates or Destroys, whenever He Gives or Takes away. He alone knows His Nature and does everything Himself." (Sri Raga M. 1, p. 53). In these verses God has been depicted as a supreme sovereign. Several words have been used as synonyms of *Hukm* in *Guru Granth Sahib* viz. *Aagya*, *Tamaae*, *Ichha*, *Anroop*, *Phurman*, *Parwana*, *Chiri*,

Haakaara, Kautak, Choj, Qudrat, Lekh, Kirt, Kalam, Kagad, Bachan, Bani, Bhai, Bhau, Sabad, Vak, Akkhar, Kavao, Amar, Bhave, Bhana, Razaa. The following commendatory and eulogistic expressions regarding *Hukm* are found in the Sikh scripture :

1. The *Hukm* of the Lord is Inexpressible.
(*Japu*, p. 10)
2. The One *Hukm* Pervades in the world.
(*Gauri M. 1*, p. 223)
3. The *Hukm* is All-Pervading, Almighty, Fearless and without enmity.
(*Japu*, pp. 1, 6)
4. The *Hukm* is Ever-Existent.
(*Maru M. 3*, p. 1045)
5. The *Hukm* is the Lord, Creator, Preserver and Destroyer of the world.
(*Sri Raga M. 1*, p. 55)
6. The *Hukm* is the cause of *Karmas*, Transmigration and Salvation.
(*Asa M. 1*, p. 412)
7. The realisation of *Hukm* is rewarding and its ignorance brings chastisement.
(*Var Ramkali M. 3*, p. 954 and *Gujri M. 3*, p. 509)
8. The *Hukm* is the pinnacle of love, yoga, devotion, knowledge and action.
(*Gauri M. 5*, p. 227)

It is not appropriate to say that the *Hukm* is merely the inner voice or the voice of the conscience or merely the outer voice or merely the moral, social and political laws or merely the laws of Nature or merely the establishment of the kingdom of God. It is the over-all Will of the Lord, which concerns the whole universe and everything concerning it. In the Sikh moral philosophy, the *Hukm* is the Divine Command, which pertains to the Laws of God. As has been said above, these laws are of three types, the physical, the moral and the spiritual. The moral law is the law of *Karma* and the spiritual law is the law of love. None can escape the Laws of God. As one sows so shall he reap. Every action brings in the due reward or punishment. The Lord creator is also the Lord Justiciar. (*Gauri M. 5*, p. 199)

Under the Command of the Lord, the impact of vices can be washed away by the meditation on the Name of the Lord. According to Guru Nanak Dev, "The Lord's name is within the Divine Command, which is realised through the True Guru." (Sri Raga M. 1, p. 72). Guru Ramdas says, "The enlightened one obeys the Command of the Lord and obtains peace under His divine Will. Under His Will, he serves the Lord and contemplates on Him; in this way he merges and makes others merge in the Lord. For him, the fasting, vow, purity and self-restraint are in the observance of Lord's Will, through which his mind obtains the desired fruit. He is like a chaste bride, who realises her Lord's Will and inspired with love, serves the True Guru." (Shalok Varan te Vadhik, pp. 1422-23).

Hukm may be identified with *Bhana* (translated as Will). Some people may declare God's Will as unlawful, because of ignorance. But the true working of the Laws of God is known only to those persons, who have attuned their will to the Will of God. They never complain knowing fully well that He is always Just. If we are subjected to several kinds of reverses in life, they are the result of our own actions and are not the resultant of sudden anger of the Lord. The Lord is All-Powerful. He may destroy the creation in a moment. But the wise know this that the destruction is always the result of some human failings. The law of cause and effect works in every field. The sorrows and griefs become a blessing in disguise and the worldly pleasures result in misery. (Japu, p. 5). When it is the Will of the Lord, the world is created. It dissolves also according to His Will. But the Law of cause and effect works throughout.

Guru and Gurbani

Hinduism and Sikhism

In every walk of life we need a guide. In order to be proficient in a line, we have to get proper training. Similar is the case in spiritual domain. For our spiritual uplift, we need a guru or a religious preceptor who prepares us in thought, deed and action in order to make us a loving bride of the Lord. The Guru or Satguru (True Guru) is the kindly light, which sheds lustre on our path. The institution of Guru is very old in Hinduism. In Upanishads, the last part of the Vedas, we find the Guru instructing his disciples. The disciple expresses his doubts and questions the seer, who gives apt replies, which are based on his personal experience. The Guru is the perfect being. He, who has realised Brahman, may be called *Satguru* (True Guru). But there have been innumerable pretenders in every age, who deceive their disciples and had only their material gains in view. They dance before their disciples in several guises for the sake of their bread. (Var Asa M. 1, p. 465).

The Sikh Gurus and the saint-poets of *Guru Granth Sahib* have painted these pretenders in their true colours. A blind preceptor always drowned his companions. (Var Majh M. 1, p. 140). If the master is naked and hungry how can his servant have to his fill? (Var Gauri M. 4, p. 306).

In *Guru Granth Sahib*, nearly every hymn talks directly or indirectly about the Guru. The Guru is the pivot of the whole Sikh thought. The abundance of the praises of the

Guru misled Dr. Trumpp, when he said, "The high position, which the Guru claimed for himself, naturally led to deification of the same, and though Nanak spoke of himself and confessed himself unlearned and the lowest of sinners, the following Gurus soon commenced, owing to the abject flattery of their adherents, to identify the Guru with the Supreme Himself. The consequence was such deification of man as had hardly ever been heard of elsewhere. Life, property and honour were sacrificed to the Guru in a way, which is often revolting to our moral feelings. It was therefore a very fortunate event for the more free and moral development of the Sikh community, that with the tenth Guru Gobind Singh, the Guruship was altogether abolished." From the book (*The Adi Granth*). This view of Dr. Trumpp is the result of his ignorance of the Indian thought and tradition. The reverence for the Guru is not only delineated in Sikhism, it is also found in Upanishads and the literature of the Bhakti cults i.e. *Tantras* and *Agamas*. For the disciple his Guru is Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva. (Japu, p. 2). For the disciple his Guru is a vast ocean, holy place of pilgrimage, a ship, a sailor, a philosopher's stone, a moneylender, a jeweller, a guide, a mahout, a doctor, a warrior, a mediator etc. He looks at his preceptor from different angles.

But the question arises about the physical aspect of the Guru-Soul. In the Primal age, the Guru-Soul was identical with Brahman. This shows that the first and foremost Guru is God Himself. Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh talk of Him as their Guru. When the universe was created by Brahman, the Guru-Soul pervades the universe as *Ishvara*, but when *Ishvara* became manifest through the enlightened Soul in a physical form, it adopted several names in different times. The enlightened Souls through whom the Word of God or Name spread in the universe, were called Gurus. The ten Gurus of the Sikhs are the ten manifestations of the Guru-Soul. All the contributors of the *Adi Granth* experienced the manifestation of the Guru-Soul within them. Since the scripture contains the message of the

Guru-Soul, its Word or *Bani* was given the status of a Guru by Guru Gobind Singh. The physical form disappeared with the tenth Guru and the Guru-Soul manifested itself in the form of Word, Name or *Bani*. In fact, the body is prone to death, but the Word lives on forever. In the *Adi Granth* i.e. *Guru Granth Sahib*, the significance of *Gurbani* or Word has been depicted in the following manner :

1. The *Bani* is the Guru and the Guru is the *Bani* and all the ambrosias exist in *Bani*.
(*Nat M. 4, p. 982*)
2. The Word is the Guru and the concentration is its disciple.
(*Ramkali M. 1, p. 943*)

The *Bani* of the Guru contained in *Guru Granth Sahib* is the Light in this world, which abides in the heart with the Grace of the Lord. (*Sri Raga M. 3, p. 67*).

The Guru possesses the following attributes :

1. He is the Knower of Brahman.
(*Malar M. 4, p. 1264*)
2. He is anxious to get the release of all humanity. He is Merciful and forgives the sinners.
(*Var Gauri M. 4, p. 302*)
3. He is the field of Piety
(*Var Gauri M. 4, p. 302*)
4. He is without enmity. He sees Brahman all around.
Everybody is equal in his eyes.
(*Var Gauri M. 4, p. 302*)
5. He is the giver of comfort and the destroyer of evils.
(*Sri Rag M. 1, p. 59*)
6. Whosoever meets him, obtains the state of Bliss.
(*Gauri M. 4, p. 168*)
7. He is like Himalayas.
(*Var Majh M. 1, p. 137*)
8. He gives the knowledge of Brahman.
(*Asa M. 4, p. 449*)
9. He gives Name or Word to the disciple.
(*Gauri Bawan Akhri M. 5, p. 262*)
10. For his disciple, he is like father, mother, master, God, friend, relative and brother.
(*Ibid., p. 250*)

11. He is the key-bearer of the House of the Lord. Only He can open it.

(Majh M. 3, p. 124)

The two significant functions of the Guru are :

1. Imparting *Guru-mantra* or Word or the Name of the Lord to the disciple and
2. Imparting the knowledge of Brahman.

In *Vishvasara Tantra*, the following significant words occur about the Guru : "The appearance of the Guru is the root of *Dhyana*, the lotus-feet of the Guru is the root of *Puja*, the Word of the Guru is the root of *mantra* and the grace of the Guru is the root of *Siddhi*." Guru Arjan Dev has given the same idea in the following verses, "Bring the appearance (*murti*) of the Guru in the *Dhyana* of the mind. Accept the Word of the Guru as the *mantra* in your mind. Adopt the feet of the Guru in your heart. Always bow before the Guru, the Higher Brahman." (Gaund M. 5, p. 864).

The True Guru includes the functions of both, of *Shiksha* Guru (Teacher Guru) and the *Diksha* Guru (initiating Guru). These functions are the imparting of the knowledge of the path and the initiation. The initiation is done through a *mantra* or the Word. The Guru guides the disciples at every step and *Siddhi* (target) is attained only through his guidance.

The position of Guru not found in Buddhism, Judaism and Christianity

The *Arhat* and *Bodhisattva* of Buddhism, Moses of Judaism and Lord Jesus of Christianity are not equivalent to the Guru in Sikhism.

Islam

Islamic mysticism manifested itself as Sufism. It took its birth as a reaction against the ritualism and cold formalism of Islam. It has been called the Muslim adaptation of the Vedanta school of Hindu Philosophy. Its thought comes near the concepts of Guru Nanak; therefore, we find that

the verses of Baba Farid were included in *Guru Granth Sahib*. According to Sufi doctrines, God, the Absolute Being, is the only reality. All beings emanate from him. He is the real author of the good and evil. He fixes the will of man. By His Grace one attains the spiritual unity with Him. The soul-bird is confined within the body-cage. It is purified by following the path with the help of *Murshid* (Guru), and by remembering the Names of God. Blind submission to a *Murshid* is a necessity.

Miracles

A miracle is a marvellous event exceeding the known powers of nature, and therefore supposed to be due to the special intervention of the Deity or some supernatural agency. The miracle itself is the power, which a spiritual aspirant attains during continual spiritual pursuits.

Mention of Miracles in Hagiographies of all the Religions

The hagiographies or the biographies of the founders and saints of all the religions contain the miraculous episodes concerning the lives of the great men. Whether it is Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, Sikhism or any other religion, we find a lot of miracles happening in the lives of the saints especially sent by God for the spiritual welfare of the masses. Moses crossed the Red Sea with his people and the armies of Pharaoh were drowned. Jesus healed all sorts of ailing people with his divine touch. The prophet of Islam, during his nocturnal journey flew upto the seventh sky on his vehicle Al-Boraq in order to meet Allah (God). At the time of the incarnation of Buddha, the heaven and earth showed signs : the dumb began speaking, the lame started walking, the musical instruments played of themselves, the flowers were showered from the sky etc. Guru Nanak Dev plunged into the stream and disappeared. He went into the Presence of God, after which he came back and appeared from the same

stream after a few days. Patanjali, the exponent of Raja Yoga in Hinduism, says that the miraculous powers are gained either through heredity or natural endowment or through drugs, mantras, austerities and contemplation. But the general belief regarding their acquisition, points to their achievement through yoga, especially *Hath Yoga*. The supernatural powers thus gained are called *Siddhis* in Sanskrit. These *Siddhis* have been mentioned several times in *Guru Granth Sahib*. A Jew named Maimonides, who lived during the latter half of the twelfth century, maintained that the miracles recounted in the scriptures were either as pre-ordained suspensions of natural law or as human modes of speech that were not to be understood in a literal way. For him even prophecy is not a miracle. According to him, the prophet is one, who is able through his imaginative faculty, to bring himself into contact with the Active Intellect of God. A Jewish philosopher of the modern era Mr. Mendelssohn who lived in the eighteenth century, believed in the possibility of miracles, but he denied that they can be used to demonstrate the truth of any religion. Abu Mansur al-Maturidi, a leader of the Islamic Hanafi school of Samarqand, who died in A.D. 944 was of the view that the miracles of the saints are established. As for the objection of the Mu 'tazila that if they were possible, human weakness would be unable to distinguish between them and the wonders of the prophets. For such an assertion Al-Maturidi says that a wonder is what appears at the time of a specific claim unlike a saint's miracle. Their position would also lead to the denial of Revelation.

Miracles according to Hinduism and Sikhism

According to Hinduism, the *Siddhis* are eighteen in number, viz.

1. *Anima* (the power of becoming infinitely small),
2. *Mahima* (the power of becoming as vast as the cosmos),
3. *Laghima* (weightlessness),
4. *Garima* (weightfulness),

5. *Prapti* (the power of being transported anywhere),
6. *Prakamya* (power to obtain anything merely by desiring it),
7. *Vashitva* (the power to control all creatures and elements),
8. *Ishitva* (Overlordship),
9. *Anurami* (the power to live without hunger and thirst),
10. *Dur-Shravan* (the power to listen from afar),
11. *Dur-Darshan* (the power to see from afar),
12. *Prakaye Pravesha* (the power to enter in another body),
13. *Svachham-Mrityu* (the power to die at will),
14. *Sur-Karira* (the power to enjoy in the company of gods),
15. *Sankalap-Siddhi* (wish-fulfilment),
16. *Eesta* (the power to persuade all),
17. *Basta* (the power to fulfil the man's desire) and
18. *Apratihata-gati* (the power to go everywhere unobstructed).

Besides these eighteen *Siddhis*, there are the following nine *Niddhis* :

1. *Padam* (Gold and Silver),
2. *Maha Padam* (diamonds and gems),
3. *Sankha* (tasteful foods and beautiful garments),
4. *Makar* (training in arms and honour in courts),
5. *Kachhap* (trade in cloth and grains),
6. *Kund* (trade in gold),
7. *Nila* (trade in pearls and corals),
8. *Mukund* (attainments in music and other fine arts), and
9. *Varch* or *Kharab* (name of one of the treasures of Kuber).

These *Niddhis* also influence the pursuits and tastes of the individuals. These *Niddhis* and *Siddhis* attract the Yogis and other self-centred persons, but they have no attraction in Sikhism. The Lord has placed all these treasures and supernatural powers on the palm of His Hand and those

who really love Him, do not care for them, but those who pick them up are led astray. (Gauri M. 5, p. 10). Guru Amar Das says :

The nine *Niddhis* and eighteen *Siddhis* pursue him, who is ever absorbed in the love of God.

(Var Sorath M. 4, Shalok M. 3, p. 649)

Without the Name of the Lord all garments and meals are useless,

All the *Siddhis* and supernatural powers are vain.

That, indeed, is a miracle and supernatural power, with which one is blessed spontaneously by the Lord.

The Name of the Lord abides in the mind of the Enlightened saith Nanak,

And this is the real miracle and supernatural power.

(Var Sorath M. 4, Shalok M. 3, p. 650)

The miracle or supernatural power is merely worldly attachment the Name does not abide in the mind.

(Var Vadhans M. 4, Shalok M. 3, p. 593)

Guru Nanak Dev has shown his aversion to miracles in the following words in *Japu* :

The performance of miracles presents a different relish. (p. 6).

In another hymn, he says :

If I put on the dress of fire and build a house in snow, if I have a meal of iron,

If I drink as water all the sorrows and push forth the earth

If I were to weigh the sky in the balance with a small copper piece,

If I grow to enormous unaccountable size and drive all by piercing their noses,

If I become so much powerful in mind that I may do anything or get it done at my bidding,

As great the Lord is, so great are His gifts, which He bestows according to His Will,

He, on whom the Lord showers His Grace, he receives the gift of the True name.

(Var Majh M. 1, p. 147)

Thus according to Guru Nanak Dev and other Gurus all the miraculous powers are vain and useless as compared to the True Name of the Lord. The Omnipresent Lord

showers His graces on him only, who is absorbed in His Name. The performance of miracle is the result of ego and the ego and the Lord (or His Name) cannot abide together. The Guru says in another hymn :

If I become a *Siddha* (adept) and attain all the occult powers and wealth,

If I appear and disappear at will and receive the adoration of the people,

O Lord ! Let me not go astray and forget Thy Name.

(Sri Raga M. 1, p. 14)

Bhai Gurdas, the great Sikh theologian, while describing the meeting of Guru Nanak Dev with the *Siddhas*, has mentioned a few miracles performed by them and the Guru's attitude towards such miracles.

According to Bhai Gurdas :

Hearing these words (of the Guru), the great Yogis screamed and materialised many spirits,

In the Iron Age, Nanak Bedi has come and abolished the six systems of Hindu philosophy,

The *Siddhas* repeated with loud voices the *mantras* and *tantras*,

The Yogis transformed their forms to tigers and wolves and exhibited many miracles,

Some of them flew like winged-birds, swimming in the firmament,

Some of them became *Nagas* and hissed violently, while others caused a rain of fire,

Bhangar Nath shattered the stars and some of them, sitting on the deer-skin, began to swim,

The fire of the *Siddhas* could not be extinguished.—41.

The *Siddhas* said, "Listen, O Nanak ! you have shown miracle to the world,

Show some miracles to us, why hast thou caused so much delay ?"

The Guru said, "O *Siddhas* ! In my view, the Yogis are without any merit,

Without the company of the Guru and the *bani*, there is no other support for me."

The Guru like the Gracious Creator was not moved by the miracles,

The *Siddhas* accepted defeat after performing *tantras* and *mantras*. The Word of the Guru depleted their power,

The Guru is the Beneficent Giver and none could evaluate Him, The *Siddhas* humbly came under the refuge of Nanak, the True Guru—42.

The Guru said to the *Siddhas*, "Listen to the Word, the True Saying from my mouth,

Without the True Name, I have no other occult power....

Without the True Name, everything is like the shadow of the clouds."—43. (Vars)

Guru Gobind Singh, the Tenth and the last Sikh Guru, giving his comments on the martyrdom of his father Guru Tegh Bahadur, the ninth Guru, wrote thus in *Bachittar Natak* :

For the sake of saints, he laid down his head without even a sigh,

For the sake of *Dharma*, he sacrificed himself, but not his creed,
The saints of the Lord abhor the performance of miracles and malpractices.

(*Apni Katha, Section 5*)

Guru Tegh Bahadur could have performed a miracle, but he abhorred such performance. An anecdote from the life of the Tenth Guru amply explains the attitude of Sikhism towards miracles :

Once the Guru ascended the mountains in Malwa...He pulled his bow in order to shoot the arrow. The mountains trembled. There were requests for protection. The Guru said, "I can destroy the whole world with one arrow, but having been born as a human being in the Iron Age, I have to remain under its limitations."

(*Parchian Sewa Das*)

The Sikh Gurus with unlimited spiritual powers at their disposal did not use an iota of it. They were themselves attuned with the Lord and also wanted their Sikhs to remain absorbed in the Name of the Lord, which they considered as the real Beneficent Power of the Lord.

Grace

In Sikhism

In Sikh Thought, great emphasis has been laid on the Grace of the Lord. *Jiva* takes its birth in the world on account of *Karma* but the final emancipation is attained only through the Grace of God :

The body takes its birth because of *Karmas*,
But the salvation is attained only through the Grace of the Lord.
(*Japu*, p. 2)

But the question arises, if our *Karmas* do not bear the desired fruit of salvation, then why the Sikh scripture emphasises the importance of good actions. In a sense, the idea of Grace is antagonistic to *Karmas*. The Gurus say :

This cup of love belongs to the Lord
And whomsoever the Lord wants, He gives this cup to him.
(*Shalok Farid*, *Shalok M. 3*, p. 1378)

My Lord is one, there is none other,
He is realised by His Grace.

(*Asa M. 1*, p. 357)

With Thy Grace one attains the highest state of bliss and
narrated the indescribable story,
Thou art the Creator, everything is Thy Creation, what is there
in the power of a *Jiva* ?

(*Asa M. 3*, p. 423)

The above quotations give an impression of the futility of human endeavour and the partiality and injustice of God. But that is not so. The Grace of the Lord begins with our acceptance of the True Path in life. The amount of Grace

necessitates our accomplishments on the right path. In fact, the Grace is not the result of any whim of the Lord, it begins and matures with beginning and maturity of our *Dharma*. From the beginning of the Grace upto the final emancipation, one works within the fold of Grace.

Whosoever comes within His Grace, in him are born the faith and love following the path of Truth and contentment, the pure mind is engrossed with the Word.

(Asa M. 3, p. 427)

Whosoever falls within His Grace meets the Guru.

(Var Asa M. 1, p. 427)

Through His Grace, we serve the Guru,
Through His Grace, we serve humanity,
Through His Grace, the mind can be controlled,
Through His Grace, the mind becomes pure.

(Vadhans M. 3, p. 558)

Truth is always pure, the truthful are also pure,
Whosoever comes within His Grace, O Brother ! attains truthfulness.

(Sorath M. 5, p. 609)

Through His Grace this attachment ceases,
And one merges in the Lord, saith Nanak.

(Asa M. 1, p. 356)

This Grace is, in fact, the focussing of the special attention of the Lord on us, though otherwise we always remain within His Sight. (Dhanasari M. 1, p. 661). We come under His Special Attention only when we turn our face towards Him and travel towards Him under His Light. Our ego vanishes. Not only we feel a change in our physical and moral planes, but we also move into the spiritual plane.

In Judaism

God in Judaism is Just and Gracious. He has created men in His Own Image, who can attain perfection through Love and Grace of the Lord. The relationship between God and human beings is one of Mercy or Grace. The Hebrew word "Hesed" has been used for undeserved love for creation, that God has for His Creation. Jewish people have been called upon to be thankful to the Lord, Whose

steadfast Love (Hesed) endures forever. (Psalm 118).

In Christianity

The reform movements of both the Catholics and Protestants viewed the seven sacraments i.e. Baptism, Confirmation, Penance, Orders, Matrimony, the sacrament of the Dying and the Eucharist as causes of Grace. The mediaeval Christian theology believed that there was a chain of Grace from God through Christ Saint Paul capsulized the Christian life and teaching by laying emphasis on Love.

In Islam

Several of the ninety-nine Names of God in Islam, point towards the Kind and Gracious Nature of God. He is *Ar-Rahman* (The Merciful) and *Ar-Rahim* (The Compassionate).

In Hinduism

There is a place for the *avatars* (incarnations) and other divine descents, who reveal to the people the Graciousness of God. Shankara's teaching destroys true theism and religious worship, but Ramanuja has given to the devotional Bhakti cults, the philosophical respectability and provides the basis for the theology of grace. God saves people entirely by His grace.

Buddhism does not talk about God, hence it is silent about grace.

Asceticism and Monasticism

Sikhism versus Hinduism

The Sikh religion is a religion of activity. Therefore it enjoins every individual to lead the life of a house-holder. It rejects *Varnas* and *ashramas* of Hinduism and lays emphasis on equality and fraternity. The four *varnas* (castes) are Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra, and the four *ashramas* (stages of life) are *Brahmacharya* (the life of a student upto 25 years), *Grihastya* (the life of a householder from 26 to 50), *Vanaprastha* (the life of a forest-dweller from 51 to 75) and *Sannyasa* (the life of a hermit from 76 to 100 years). The castes and *ashramas* were first instituted according to the division of *Karmas*. Brahmins, Kshatriyas and Vaishyas were given the name of *dvijas* or twice-born. Thus for religious purposes we have only two divisions of castes i.e. *dvijas* and *shudras*. Brahmins were given the duty of study and priesthood. Warlike duties were assigned to Kshatriyas. The trade and money-making concerns belonged to Vaishyas. The *shudras* had only to serve the *dvijas*. The word *dvija* means the second birth. The first birth was in the house of the parents and the second birth was in the spiritual domain. The second birth is said to be the real birth. Only *dvijas* were entitled to the initiation ceremony and the recitation of Vedic mantras. The initiation ceremony was the investment with the sacred thread. The second birth took place only on wearing this sacred thread, which is called the *Janjhu* or the *yagyopavita*

ceremony. The *Adi Granth* has rejected this ceremony of initiation. (See Shlokas in Var Asa M. 1, p. 471). A *dvija* was expected to pass through four stages of life mentioned above. Out of these four only *Grihastya* was considered the right one and all the other three were rejected. *Grihastya* or the second *ashrama* is the life of a house-holder. *Brahmacharya*, the stage of studentship and celibacy, *Vanaprastha*, the life of retirement in the forest and *Sannyasa*, the stage of renunciation and mendicancy were rejected by the Sikh scripture. Every Sikh is a *Grihastya* Sikh. He has to plunge into the field of action; his path is *pravritti marga*. While following this path, he has to remain under a discipline ordained by the preceptor. While remaining in this world of activity, the Sikh who earns for himself and his family, is in a position to give tithe (*daswandh*) for the good of others. With the attainment of *artha* (wealth), his *kama* is fulfilled and following the path of *Dharma* (piety), he gradually matures himself under the guidance of the preceptor for his real destination i.e. *moksha* (final emancipation).

Buddhism

Two major sects of Buddhism are Hinayana (or Theravada) and Mahayana. Hinayana or the Lesser Vehicle confined its salvation to a select few, but Mahayana or the Greater Vehicle extended salvation to a much larger number of people. Hinayana is agnostic idealism and follows the simple morality of Buddha, but Mahayana is a speculative theistic system. The goal in Hinayana is Arhathood and a negative cessation of misery, but the goal of Mahayana is a positive state of bliss. Hinayana's Arhat believes in personal salvation but Mahayana's Bodhisattva wants salvation for all. The *Nirvana* of Hinayana is negative and individualistic and of Mahayana positive and universal. Hinayana is *dry asceticism*, but Mahayana believes in selfless service of humanity.

The central institution of Hinayana Buddhism is the

Sangha, the company of such disciples, who renounced the world in order to walk on the path leading to Arhathood. They were wanderers like Vanaprasthis and lived mostly in grooves. These wandering mendicants were known as *Bhikshus*. They were mostly men, but later on some women were also accepted in the *Sangha*. They wore a monastic costume of yellow or orange cloth and sought their daily food as alms. Such an order of *Bhikshus* was also there amongst Jainas. These ascetic orders have been rejected by the Sikh Gurus. In the time of Guru Nanak Dev the Digambaras or Jaina monks roamed in the country, whom the Guru strongly denounced in one of his hymns. (See the hymn in Var Majh Ki, M. 1, p. 149).

Judaism

Judaism is averse to asceticism and renunciation like Sikhism. Both are monotheistic faiths and reject idolatry and polytheism.

Christianity

An important aspect of the Roman Catholic history is the survival of religious orders. Men and women committed themselves to the manner of life bounded by poverty and chastity. It began in its present form in the fourth century Egypt. There was individual dedication to life as a hermit. Individual monasteries followed in different ways, which ultimately produced quite distinct order of monks. These monasteries are usually found in the country.

Islam

The earliest mystics of Islam i.e. the Sufis were chiefly interested in ascetic practices and moral discipline. In the closing years of his life Al-Ghazali, the author of *Ihya'u 'Ulumid'd-Din* established a monastery at Tus in eastern Iran, where he and his disciples led a life closely to the monastic discipline. The *dervish* orders came into being in the beginning of the twelfth century. Each order shared

a common life in its monastery. It had its distinctive form of worship including *dhikr*, supplemented by the observance of the *Shar'a*. The word *dhikr* means the remembrance of the Name of God.

Rejection of the Life of Renunciation in Sikhism

All the techniques involving austere modes of life, violent processes and inconvenient postures of the body have been rejected by Guru Nanak Dev. According to him :

There are some, who go to the forests and observe silence

There are others who suffer the pangs of frosty winter and ice-cold water

There are others who besmear their bodies with ashes and do not wash off the dirt

There are others who wear matted hair and look wild, in this way they dishonour their lines

There are others who wander about naked all the time and do not have sound sleep

There are others who burn their limbs in fire and waste away themselves

Without the Name of the Lord, their bodies are reduced to ashes, why and for what to wail for them ?

Only they look beautiful in the court of the Lord, who serve their True Guru.

(*Var Malar M. 1, pp. 1284-85*)

Devotion (Bhakti) and Worship (Individual and Congregational)

Sikhism

Bhakti or devotion takes its birth out of faith. For every individual, the first requisite of a religious and devoted life is faith. A Muslim must have the prayer-mat of faith (Var Majh M. 1, p. 14) and a yogi, the staff of faith (Japu, p. 6). Without faith there can be only deceit and no devotion. (Sri Raga M. 3, p. 28). Devotion demands complete self-surrender. The devotee cannot question the Will of the Lord. Fear of the Fearless Lord is a pre-requisite for devotion. (Var Suhi M. 3, p. 788). Ordinarily fear and love are two antagonistic factors in the development of human personality, but in the domain of devotion, they go side by side. The devotee is full of undefiled fear and pure love, fear of the Omnipotent and Love of the Merciful and Compassionate Lord. The real devotion of the Lord is His Love. (Sri Raga M. 3, p. 28). There are two types of devotion i.e. *Laukika* (*Behrang*—outward) and *Anuraga* (*Antarang*—inward). The Sikh Gurus have rejected the outward form of devotion. They have laid great emphasis on inward devotion i.e. pure love. Guru Amar Das has defined *Bhakti* in the following manner :

Whosoever experiences inward love gets release,
He controls his senses through the path of truth and continence,
He always remembers the Lord with the WORD of the Guru;

This form of Bhakti is liked by the Lord.

(*Majh M. 3, p. 122*)

The devotion which inspired a devotee to dance before the image of a god or goddess is rejected by the Sikh Gurus :

The fools practise devotion, but exhibit themselves,
They dance and jump and are in great misery;
There can be no devotion by dancing and jumping,
Whosoever dies in Word, realises the true devotion.

(*Gauri M. 3, p. 159*)

Traditionally, in Hinduism, there are nine types of Bhakti called *Naudha bhakti*, which include the devotion through 1—listening (*Shravan*), 2—music (*Kirtan*), 3—remembrance (*Simran*), 4—washing the feet of the Lord (*Pad-sevan*), 5—service (*archana*), 6—bowing (*vandan*), 7—obedience (*Daas-bhav*), 8—friendship (*Mittarta*) and 9—self-surrender (*Atam-nivedan*). Suitable quotations regarding each type of Bhakti can be found out in the poetry of the Sikh Gurus but prominence is given to *Prema-Bhakti* or devotion through love. This path of devotion is very difficult to attain. It can only be attained through the Grace of the Guru and the Lord. (*Asa M. 3, p. 440*).

Injunctions of the Guru regarding the Worship of the Lord by a Sikh

Guru Ram Das expressed the way of living of a *Gursikh* in the following manner :

"He, who calls himself a Sikh of the True Guru, he should get up in the early hours of the morning and remember the Name of the Lord. He should make effort to rise before the day dawns and take a bath in the pool of nectar. Under the instructions of the Guru, he should repeat the mantram of the Guru, all his troubles will end all his sins and blemishes will be destroyed. Then when the day dawns, he should sing the *bani* of the Guru and remember the Name of the Lord, while sitting or moving. He who remembers my Lord with every breath and loaf, that *Gursikh* is liked by the Guru. He, on whom my Lord showers His Blessings, the Guru instructs that *Gursikh*. I

beg for the dust of the feet of that Gursikh, who not only repeats the Name of the Lord, but also makes others to repeat it." (Var Gauri M. 4, p. 305).

Bhai Gurdas, the great Sikh theologian, who lived during the lives of four Sikh Gurus, mentions the following characteristics of a Gursikh :

"I am a sacrifice to those Gursikhs, who get up in the early hours of the morning, who take a bath in the pool at the ambrosial hour, who remember the Guru with full concentration, who join the holy congregation and always sing and listen to the *bani* of the Guru, who remain in tune with the discipline, who, in devotion of love, celebrate the festivals in memory of the Guru and who remaining in service of the Guru prosper." (Var 12, Pauri 2).

Only the Lord and none other is to be Worshipped

Only the Lord-God is to be worshipped and this worship consists in the remembrance of the Name of the Lord. Guru Amar Das says :

"O saints ! the worship of the Lord is difficult to obtain. Its praise is inexpressible. O saints ! the Gurmukh realises the Perfect Lord. The Worship is done through the remembrance of the Name. O saints ! without the Lord everything else is filthy, what offering should be made for the Worship of the Lord ? Whatever Pleases the True Lord, that alone is His worship, one should be totally obedient to the Will of the Lord. O saints ! everyone worships the Lord, but the worship of the egocentric is not approved. O saints ! one who dies with the WORD and makes his mind pure, his worship is accepted by the Lord." (Ramkali M. 3, p. 910).

Congregational Worship

The Sikh is a member of the ideal brotherhood, which is called *Sadh Sangat*, *Sat Sangat* or *Satsang*. Every member of this brotherhood is completely engrossed in the Name of the Lord. This brotherhood is like a boat, which takes the inmate beyond the world-ocean, who is never born again.

The pure intellect dawns upon him and his overturned mind-lotus blossoms. In this brotherhood, in the company of the saintly persons, the novice gets the instructions of the Guru through the *Sadh Sangat*. The spirit of the Guru resides in the *sangat*. The saintly members of this congregation are the cream of the society, whose touch melts the hardest of hearts. Whosoever comes in their contact, forgets all jealousies. He is the friend of all and enemy of none. This congregation is the school of the True Guru, where the disciple learns about the qualities of the Lord, which he has to imbibe within himself.

Gurdwara

The abode where the *Sadh Sangat* congregates, is known as Gurdwara or the house of the Guru. After the passing away of the tenth Guru, the Guruship passed on to *Granth Sahib*. Thus every Gurdwara is the abode of *Guru Granth Sahib* and the *Sadh Sangat* is presided over by the Guru through its *bani*. After every prayer in the Gurdwara, the following verses are repeated daily :

The *Panth* was started by the order of the Timeless,
And Sikhs are ordained to accept *Granth Sahib* as their
Guru,
Granth Sahib may be accepted as the manifestation of
the Guru.

Whosoever hath a pure heart, can find the Guru in the WORD. The disciples gathered together in a congregation belong to different spiritual status according to their efforts and the Grace of the Guru. The indwelling Guru helps them and each one of them helps his fellow disciples upto the extent of his own experience in the spiritual domain. The Words of the Guru or *Gurubani* guide the disciples at every step. The main function of *Sadh Sangat* is the remembrance of the Name of the Lord. For this purpose each disciple concentrates on the WORD of the Guru and the music of the sweet songs of the Guru not only helps him to drink deep, the nectar of *bani*, but also helps him in further

spiritual flights. The singing of *Gurubani* is known as *Kirtan*. There may also be the elucidation or exposition of *Gurubani* which is called *Katha* (discourse). In the Sikh congregation there is no distinction between a male and a female Sikh. They may sit in the congregation all together or even separately. In Sikhism, the status of woman is equal to man.

Hinduism

There are various sects and Bhakti-cults in Hinduism. Their rites differ considerably regarding the worship of the deity. Hinduism adores many gods and goddesses, for whom temples had been raised and various rites, ceremonies and sacraments were performed in those temples by the priestly class i.e. Brahmins. Mention has been made of the nine types of Bhakti called *Naudha Bhakti*, which had been prevalent among the Hindu populace and which forms part of the *Laukika* or *Behrang Bhakti*. After the period of Vedic sacrifices the image-worship of the gods and goddesses became prevalent in Hinduism. There were also private acts of devotion in Hindu homes. In the temples the *aarti* (Circumambulation) is performed by the devotees, keeping the images on the right and offering gifts of flowers, incense, food or money. The temple-priests served the images considering them as living gods.

Attitude of Sikhism towards Image-Worship in Hinduism, Jainism and Buddhism

Idolatry has been prevalent in several religions throughout the world. It has always been an integral part of the Hindu religion. The pre-Aryans in India also worshipped the phallus. After Buddha's death, the image-worship was introduced in Buddhism and idols of Buddha were produced on a large scale. The word 'butt' for the image in Hindustani is a derivative from 'Buddha'. Jainism had also been practising idolatry. The Sikh Gurus and radical saints of the Bhakti Movement considered their Lord only in His Transcendental aspect, Who is without any form, delineated

tion and colour, Who is Indefinable, Immeasurable and Inaccessible. The Lord cannot be installed (Japu) therefore He cannot be adored in any form, image or idol.

For an orthodox Hindu, the idol is not at all a lifeless representation. He considers it the very essence of the deity. He joins his mind with devotion to a symbol of God, which he takes to be God. He accepts the doctrine of incarnation. Several gods and goddesses in the Hindu Pantheon like Vishnu, Shiva and Durga and the incarnations like Rama and Krishna represent the Ultimate Reality. But in Sikhism all the gods, goddesses and their incarnations have been rejected.

The main purpose in image-worship is to spiritualise the image through sincere love for Lord-God. But there are people who without understanding such a high ideal, worship the image itself as God with some selfish motive. Such a worship is unbecoming because it brings down God to the level of worldly object. While the latter may be called an idolater, the former who worships God through constant love for the Lord, ultimately attains salvation. Namdev and Dhanna were such like devotees. We find their mention in the Sikh literature and their hymns, expounding their exuberance of love for God, have been included in *Guru Granth Sahib*. In early stages of their religious life, they were presented with idols for worship. But they worshipped God and not the idols. The Lord appeared to both of them. With the achievement of unity with the Lord, Namdev said, "We adore one stone (idol) and put our feet on the other. If one is god, then the other must also be a god. But I am in the service of the Lord." (Gujri Namdev, p. 525).

Kabir says, "O Lady-gardener ! you pluck the leaves, but in every leaf there is life. The stone (idol) for which you pluck the leaves, that stone is lifeless. O lady-gardener ! you have made a mistake in this. The True Guru is the living god. Brahma is in the leaves, Vishnu in the bough and Shiva in the flowers. Thus you pluck evidently the three gods; then whom you are serving ? The sculptor, fixing the stone, carved an idol out of it, by placing his feet on its breast. If

this idol is truly a god, then it could eat up the sculptor. The rice, pulse, porridge, pancake and pudding were enjoyed by the enjoyer (the priest) and the ashes are in the mouth of this idol. The lady-gardener is mistaken and the world is mistaken, but I am not mistaken. The Lord through His Grace hath protected me." (Asa Kabir, p. 479). He says again, "The people purchase the stone-gods and worship them and through the pertinacity of the mind go to the pilgrim-stations. They adopt guises on seeing one another, they go astray and wander at large. The whole world worships the stone-idol as god. Those who stick to this belief are drowned in the sable stream." (Shalok Kabir, p. 1371). Guru Nanak Dev emphasises :

O brother ! you worship stone-gods and goddesses; what have you to ask from them and what can they give ?

O brother ! if you wash the stone in water, it sinks down below.

(*Sorath M. 1, p. 637*)

Guru Arjan Dev says, "Those who call the stone a god, their service is in vain. Those who fall at the feet of the stone-god, all his labour goes waste. My Lord always speaks and gives gifts to all living beings. The blind one does not know that the Lord lives within (our body). Deluded by illusion, he is entangled in a noose. The stone-god neither speaks nor gives anything. All the rituals performed (by the idolater) are in vain and the service is fruitless." (Bhairo M. 5, p. 1160).

Judaism

The Jewish house of prayer is known as synagogue. There is an Ark in the eastern wall, which contains Torah scrolls. The Torah scroll consists of the Pentateuch written by hand on parchment. The scrolls are bedecked with silver bells and other embellishments. The service in the synagogue on Sabbath days and festivals and other important occasions consists of the reading of Torah. The scroll is taken out ceremoniously from the Ark and circumambulated in the synagogue, before opening it for reading. On each

Sabbath a weekly portion of the Torah is sung, led by seven responsible members of the congregation. The male worshippers wear shawls (*tallits*) to which fringes (*tzitzits*) are attached. In the traditional synagogues, the male and female worshippers sit separately, but this practice has been abandoned in the reformed synagogues. Any member of the congregation, who knows the Hebrew language, can lead the ordinary congregation in prayer, but in larger synagogues, a professional cantor or a rabbi delivers the sermon. There is no priestly class in Judaism. The cantor or rabbi are not the priests. Since nineteenth century, the rabbi, of course, plays the role of a preacher, pastor and counsellor. Sometimes women are appointed as rabbis. The Jewish people are bound by the covenant with God to the task of being a corporate priesthood.

Christianity

The chief act of the Roman Catholic Church is the Eucharist or the Mass. By the sixteenth century, a good number of different ways of conducting the Mass had been established. There have been distinct styles of celebrating the Mass. Somewhere a professional choir sings with the accompaniment of a small orchestra somewhere the Mass is accompanied by mediaeval tones, at other places, there are folk-tunes played on guitars. Within the context of Mass, a number of sacraments are commonly bestowed. For the holy orders of deacons, priests and bishops, this has always been the case, but it is also increasingly the case for baptism, confirmation and matrimony. The confession of a sin to a priest is followed by absolution bestowed by the priest. There has also been the practice of holding services in churches for the anointing of the sick. The minister of all the sacraments except matrimony and holy orders, is generally a priest. Deacons frequently administer baptism. The minister of holy orders is a bishop. Nowadays, a great emphasis is laid on eucharistic worship. The saying of rosary has remained a common practice among Catholics. Most frequently, the statues of Christ, Virgin Mary and

patron saints are found in the churches. The service in most Lutheran eucharistic liturgies consists of two main sections—Word and Sacrament, within which are placed traditional elements. Since there is high regard for scripture, the sermon is given a central place in Lutheran liturgies. Only two sacraments i.e. Baptism and the last Supper were recognised by Calvin and his followers, who wanted to keep their order free from ritual. In the Church of England, the service of Holy Communion is the central rite with daily morning and evening prayer and the occasional services of baptism and matrimony. The Methodist church observes the gospel sacraments, baptism and the Lord's Supper.

Islam

Every Muslim performs *Salator* formal worship, five times a day. The times are dawn (*fajr*), midday (*zuhr*), afternoon (*asr*), sunset (*maghrib*) and night (*isha*). The worship is always preceded by ablutions in order to ensure ritual purity. The worshippers face the direction of Mecca. The priest or *Mullah* (*Mu' adhdhin*) gives the call to prayers at appropriate times. The mosques are usually built to indicate the direction (*qibla*) to be faced during the worship. In the beginning of the prayer, the Muslim stands upright and expresses his intention, repeating the *takbir* 'God is very Great'. This is followed by the first *rak'a* or the ritual cycle. Each *rak'a* begins with the *qira'a* or recitation of the *Fatiha* (the opening *sura* of the Quran) and another short passage. Then comes the *ruku*, hands on knees, accompanied by the words 'Praise be to God'. After returning briefly to the upright position (*i'tidal*) the worshipper then prostrates himself in the *sujud*, touching the ground with his forehead, palms, knees and toes, while saying the *takbir*. From this he changes to a sitting position on his heels, and says another *takbir* before making a second prostration in which he asks for God's Mercy. This action concludes the first *rak'a*. The dawn worship has two such *rak'as*, the sunset worship three

and the others four. After the second prostration of the last *rak'a* the worshipper takes an upright sitting position (*qu'ud*) hands on knees while pronouncing greetings on God and the Prophet, then repeats the Shahads or Confession of Faith, followed by a prayer that God will bless and preserve Muhammad and a prayer for the peace of those on his right and his left. This completes the act of worship. If there are a good number of Muslims gathered in the mosque for prayer, they form lines facing the *qibla* and *Imam*, the leader stands in front to give the timing for the various movements, which all perform together. A single Muslim may perform the worship on a *musallah* (prayer-mat), which he lays down, facing Mecca. The *Hajj* (pilgrimage to Mecca) of a Muslim consists of a number of ceremonies spread over several days of the pilgrimage month of Dhu-l-hijja. These include sevenfold circumambulation of the *Ka'ba* (the shrine) which is performed several times during the ceremonies, the running (*sa'y*) seven times between as-Safa and al-Marwa, two points beside the mosque 400 metres apart, the waiting (*wukuf*) on 'Arafat', a plain 15½ miles (25 kilometres) from Mecca, for most of the period between midday and sunset on the 9th day of the month, while listening to two addresses and possibly conversing with friends; the sacrifice of a sheep or goat, if one can afford it, at Mina (halfway back to Mecca) on the 10th of the month, the day known as 'id-al-adha' (the festival of the sacrifice); the throwing of forty-nine (or seventy) pebbles at three heaps of stones in Mina, of which one is identified with 'the great demon'. Before entering the sacred territory of Mecca, the pilgrim must put on the simple pilgrim garb (*ihram*) consisting of two lengths of white cloth. The ceremonies in Mecca itself constitute the 'lesser pilgrimage' or '*Umra*', and this may be performed at any time of the year. The women do not join the prayers.

In Buddhism

In Buddhism, the threefold Refuge is constituted by

Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha. There is also observance of five precepts : 1—not to kill, 2—not to steal, 3—not to indulge in sexual misconduct, 4—not to tell lies and 5—not to take intoxicants. The meritorious deeds are generally indicated under threefold categories of *dana* (charity), *sila* (right conduct) and *bhavana* (meditation). The *uposatha* or the Buddhist Sabbath, which falls on the first, eighth, fifteenth and twenty-third days of the lunar month is observed as a day of retreat and meditation within the precincts of a temple. There are others who listen to the religious sermons or songs or go on a pilgrimage to some noteworthy shrine. Many Buddhists bring offerings of flowers and worship at the shrine-room, stupa or bo-tree of the temple, where the services are organised by the monks. The congregational rites are performed in accompaniment with music. Traditionally a flower, water and some rice are offered by a Buddhist worshipper at the shrine. The Lay Buddhists support the Sangha, the community of monks, who perform the religious services.

Prayer

In Sikhism

A Prayer is a personal communication addressed to a deity in the form of supplication, adoration, praise, contrition or thanks-giving. But in Sikhism all other deities except God have been rejected. All other gods, goddesses, angels and the spirits are prone to death. Why should one serve or remember him, who takes birth and then dies down. (Var Gujri M. 3, p. 509). Even Brahmas, Vishnus and Shivas pass away after the lapse of their fixed period of life. (10 swayyas, Dasam Granth). Only One Lord will be there in all the ages. Who has not died ? and who will not die ? (Maru M. 1, p. 1022). Death is a certainty and the souls, because of their actions, undergo transmigration; the human being wears the garments of both pleasure and pain, happiness and sorrow. (Var Majh M. 1, p. 149), which he receives from the Lord according to his worth. But the suffering mostly pervades in our lives. The so-called pleasures of the world also bring pain. As many are the pleasures of the body, so many are the sufferings. (Var Malar M. 1, p. 1287). The sensuous pleasures result in sufferings and maladies. (Basant M. 1, p. 1189). Guru Nanak Dev has said, "There is suffering in birth and suffering in death and suffering in all the dealings of the world. (Var Sarang M. 4, Shalok M. 1, p. 1240). There is suffering in separation, there is suffering in hunger; there is suffering of the mighty Yama. There is also suffering

caused by physical ailment. (Malar M. 1, p. 1256). Guru Nanak Dev has also conclusively said, "Though the *Jivas* move towards their destruction by the fire of suffering, still the suffering itself is the remedy. (Var Sarang M. 4, Shalok M. 1, p. 1240) and this peace-giving remedy is the Prayer, gushing out from the core of the heart.

The formal Prayer is like a ritual. Everyday it is offered in Sikh temples in the mornings as well as in the evenings. The real prayer is neither ritualistic nor it can be captured in the vesture of language, by the human beings without devotion, faith and love. The Prayer creates a bridge between the soul and the Lord. It wells up in the mind of the man of God. The prayers are offered not only by the men of God but also by the men of the world. The men of the world may express worldly demands in their formal prayers. They may also pray from their hearts if they need something for themselves very badly. They may also request for a grave danger to be averted from someone whom they love. The men of God may express worldly requirements which can help in their spiritual quest. They may also pray for strength to be granted to them for the welfare and service of humanity, in which they visualise the All-Pervasive Lord. Even the formal prayer of the Sikhs end with the following words :

"Nanak Nam Charhdi Kala,
Tere Bhane Sarbat Da Bhala."

(The Name of the Lord emanating from the Guru (Guru Nanak) may bring high spirits and the welfare of all in His Will).

Most of the hymns of *Guru Granth Sahib*, written by the Sikh Gurus and radical saints are the prayers offered to the Lord or the Guru. A Sikh offers his prayers in the presence of *Guru Granth Sahib*, the Sikh scripture, if he can. But if he is out of his home or is in journey, he can offer his prayers any time at any place. The prayers fixed for daily observance are recorded in the beginning of *Guru Granth Sahib*. They are meant for three times during the day viz.,

1. *Japu*, a longer *bani* of Guru Nanak Dev to be recited in the mornings,
2. *So-Daru* or *Rahiras*, consisting of nine hymns of the Gurus, to be recited in the evenings, and
3. *Sohila* or *Aarti* or *Kirtan Sohila*, consisting of five hymns of the Gurus, to be recited at bed-time.

Bhai Gurdas, the Sikh theologian has made a mention of these prayers in his first Var. Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee has, however, added a few hymns of the Gurus with *Rahiras Sahib*, consisting especially of some verses from the *Dasam Granth*.

In Hinduism

The daily observances of a Hindu are mainly divided into three parts, viz., 1—*Sandhya*, 2—*Puja* (worship) and 3—*Panchmahayajna*. The *Sandhya* is a prayer, which is performed three times a day after taking bath. The first prayer is performed at sunrise, the second at noon and the third at sunset. This prayer is Vedic in origin. It is divided into three parts. The first part consists of Vedic *mantras* for purification, the second part contains the *Gayatri* or *Savitri mantra*. This is followed by the well-known practice of *pranayama*. The *Dviija* breathes deeply, closing the right nostril, shutting the mouth and then both the nostrils with right hand; then expelling the breath through the left nostril.

There is mention of *Sandhya* and *Gayatri* in *Guru Granth Sahib*. *Gayatri Japa* is an invocation to the sun. The devotee faces the sun. Guru Amar Das says, "He (the devotee) performs *Sandhya*, *Tarpan* and *Gayatri*, but without True knowledge, he is in misery." (Sorath M. 3, p. 603). The second daily observance of a Hindu is *Puja* (worship) which is offered to deities viz. *navagrahas* (the guardian deities of the nine planets), *Dasadikpalas* (the guardians of the ten directions), *Surya* (Sun), *Ganesha*, *Vishnu*, *Shiva* and *Shakti*. The followers of five *Bhakti* cults follow their separate methodology of worship and recite their own sets of prayers. The *Vaishnavas*, besides worshipping *Vishnu* and his incarna-

tions, also worship stones and images whom they call saligram. The *Aarti* is performed by Vaishnavas and Shaivas in their temples, wherein they recite various prayers and *mantras*. The Shaktas have their own modes of worship. The Vamacharis are steeped in sensuous life. The third kind of daily observance of a Hindu are *Panchmahayajnas*. The following five kinds of sacrifices are performed everyday : 1—*Brahma Yajna*, 2—*Pitri Yajna*, 3—*Deva Yajna*, 4—*Bhuta Yajna* and 5—*Atithi Yajna*. The first *Yajna* calls upon every Hindu to study the Vedas. With regard to the second *Yajna*, he offers oblations to the manes. The third *Yajna* consists sacrifices to gods through fire. With regard to the fourth *Yajna*, consistent sacrifices are offered to the departed souls. The fifth *Yajna* is *Atithi Yajna*, which means hospitality to guests.

In Islam

The five pillars of Islam are : 1—Belief in One God, 2—Belief in the angels, 3—Belief in the Prophets, 4—Belief in the Day of Judgment and 5—Belief in the Qudrah (the Timeless Knowledge of God). The five pillars of observance in Islam are. 1—*Shahada* (The Creed), 2—*Salat* (Prayer), 3—*Zakat* (Charity), 4—*Siyam* (Fasting) and *Hajj* (Pilgrimage to Mecca). The five compulsory daily prayers are said at dawn, midday, in the afternoon, after sunset and after nightfall. For details about the Muslim Prayer, kindly see the Chapter on Devotion and Worship.

In Buddhism

The Buddhist proclaims the efficacy of three jewels or refuges : 1—I go to the Buddha for refuge, 2—I go to the *Dhamma* (doctrine) for refuge and 3—I go to the *Sangha* (community) for refuge. The idea in Hinayana Buddhism is Arhathood and in Mahayana Buddhism is Bodhisattva. The idea of Ultimate Reality is absent, therefore there is absence of the idea of Prayer. However, there are bodhisattva vows which are found in the Pali tradition. One of the vows is given hereunder :

"Through the accomplishment of all perfections; morality, renunciation, wisdom and the rest (i.e. generosity, energy, patience, truthfulness, determination, loving kindness and equanimity), and through their highest realization, may I attain to supreme Buddhahood."

A Tibetan monk recites the following *mantra* : "OM MANI PADMA HUM".

In Judaism

The observant Jew recites three standard prayers everyday, in morning, in the afternoon and at night. The Jewish house of prayer is called the Synagogue. Though one can recite the prayers in private, but it is highly meritorious, if they are recited in public and also collectively. At least ten men should recite the prayers all together. The female Jews are, however, exempted from the strictness of reciting the three prayers everyday. Any member of the Jewish congregation, who is familiar with the Hebrew language and knows the traditional melody, can lead the congregation in prayer.

According to Jewish belief, the Lord-God listens to our prayers and always answers to them. The answers depend upon His Own Judgment about us. Man must pray with true inwardness. It should emanate from the core of his heart.

In Christianity

The first Christians in Palestine held private services of prayer. This private service of prayer and the breaking of bread, the communion service or Eucharist came to be seen in the second century as a vehicle of grace and one of the sacraments. The dogma of the Church was reaffirmed at the Council of Trent (1545-63) in the face of the criticisms of the reformation. Roman Catholic dogma has continued to develop since that time. Trent reasserted the propriety of the cult of the saints and their invocation in prayer. It insisted upon the value for prayers of the dead and upon

the existence of purgatory, a state between Heaven and Hell, in which the soul is purified of any remaining guilt for sins committed during life. The Anglican liturgy itself furnishes a standard of doctrine, and until the recent liturgical changes were introduced the Church of England's Prayerbook stood as a virtual memorial to Thomas Crammer whose first English service-book appeared in 1549. The latter was not far removed from the mediaeval forms of worship, but its successor of 1552 was decidedly more Protestant in tone, although the Elizabethan book of 1559, which replaced it, to some extent corrected the balance. The book of Common Prayer, endorsed by Parliament, was largely a re-publication of this. The service of the Holy Communion is the central rite, with forms for morning and evening prayer daily and various occasional services such as those of baptism and the solemnization of marriage. A revised Alternative Service Book was published in 1980.

The prayer is at the heart of religious belief in general. The person of faith is the person of prayer. The faith brings forth prayer. In the case of liturgy, the prayer is generally formal, but in the case of an individual devotee, it is spontaneous. The spontaneous prayer finds its outlet in a natural flow of words and gestures. The Eucharistic prayer is the deep centre from which all the Catholic prayer arises. The Christian model of prayer is Lord Jesus Himself. The manner in which a believer 'sees' Christ, greatly determines the character of his prayer. We give an example of such a prayer from the Anglican Book of Common Prayer (1662), which is as follows :

"O Almighty God, who has knit together thine elect in one communion and fellowship, in the Mystical Body of Thy Son Christ. Our Lord; grant us the grace so as to follow Thy blessed saints in all virtuous living that we may come to those unspeakable joys, which Thou has prepared for them that unfeignedly love Thee; through Jesus Christ Our Lord. Amen."

Baptism or Initiation

In Sikhism

The Sikhs may be divided into two types viz., 1—*Sahjdharis*, who do not grow long hair and do not adopt the discipline of five Ks instituted by Guru Gobind Singh and 2—Singhs or Khalsa or *Keshadharis*, who grow long hair and remain under the discipline throughout their life. Their discipline begins with their initiation into Khalsa brotherhood. This baptism or initiation ceremony is called *Amrit Chhakna* (the drinking of the holy nectar). Five select Singhs from a congregation, who are ideal Sikhs and follow the discipline strictly and who are called five beloved ones (*Panj Piaras*) perform this ceremony. They offer prayers and recite all the *banis* of *Nitnem* (daily observation) over the vessel in which sugar (in the form of *Patashas*) is mixed in water. The spirit of the *bani* goes in the mixture transforming it into the holy nectar. This nectar is distributed to the Sikhs adopting the discipline of five Ks. All the disciples drink it from the same vessel, when the hymns from *Guru Granth Sahib* and *Dasam Granth* are chanted. This nectar is also sprinkled on their bodies. In this way a disciple drinks deep the spirit of purity and becomes a Singh (lion) or a *Khalsa* (God's Own and Pure).

Five Ks

At this ceremony, the disciple is asked to observe *Nitnem* regularly and wear five Ks viz., 1—*Kesh* (long hair),

2—*Kachh* (underwear), 3—*Kara* (iron bangle), 4—*Kangha* (the comb) and 5—*Kripan* (the sword). *Keshas* denote saintly appearance, *Kachh* is meant for self-control, *Kara* for abstaining from the use of hand for theft or adultery or violence, *Kangha* denotes cleanliness of mind and body. The significance of *Kripan* is self-defence, but in the times of emergency, it can be used for a right, truthful and just cause.

Taboos

Any minor offence with regard to the discipline is a taboo for a Singh, but the following four are the major ones :

1. He has not to remove hair from any part of the body under any circumstances, 2. He should never eat *halal* i.e. the meat cut and prepared in the mode adopted by Muhammedans, 3. He should never commit adultery and 4. He should never use tobacco in any form.

Penalty (Tankhah)

A Sikh, who makes a confession before the congregation regarding any major or minor offence, a disciplinary action is taken against him by *Sadh Sangat* (congregation) according to the nature of offence. Since a confession is a sort of repentance the punishment given is of a mild nature, either the recitation of *bani* or the service of the *Sadh Sangat*.

In Hinduism

Hinduism is *Varnashrama Dharma*, a religion, which believes in *Varnas* and *Ashramas* (stages of life). There are four chief *Varnas* i.e. Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra. The first three castes are known as *dvijas* or twice-born. The first birth is the physical birth in the house of the parents and the second birth is the spiritual birth, procured through the initiation ceremony. This ceremony was the investment with the sacred thread. It is known as the ceremony of *Janjhu* (Janeo), Yagyopavita or Brahma-sutra. According to Manu, the Brahmin's thread should be of

cotton, Kshatri's of jute and the Vaishya's of the wool of a ram. The wearing-in ceremony of this sacred thread was performed by the Brahmin. The Sikh scripture has rejected this ceremony of initiation. Guru Nanak Dev has said, "If mercy be the cotton, contentment the thread, continence the knot and truth the twist, if this be the sacred thread of the soul, only then, O Pundit ! Put it on me."

In Buddhism

To start in Buddhism, one needs no doctrinal assumptions. Only an awareness of the conditioned existence of ourselves and all others is required. A non-Buddhist may enter Buddhism at his special point of interest.

In Judaism

Circumcision is the most ancient of Jewish rituals. It is recorded in Torah, the Jewish scripture : "And God said to Abraham, You therefore shall keep My covenant, and your seed after you, throughout their generation. This is My covenant, which you shall keep, between Me and you and your seed after you, every male among you shall be circumcised. You shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskin, that it may be a sign of the covenant between Me and you. An infant of eight days old shall be circumcised among you, every male throughout your generation, he that is born in your house and he that is bought with your money, must be circumcised. My covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant. The male who is uncircumcised in the flesh of his foreskin, that soul shall be destroyed out of his people, because he has broken My covenant." Judaism also accepts converts.

In Christianity

Originally, Baptism was in the name of Christ, but later on, it became threefold i.e. in the name of Father, Son and the Holy Spirit. Several ideas have been linked to Baptism with water viz., repentance, conversion, purifying from sin,

regeneration, illumination, promise of eternal life, reception of the Spirit, union with Christ and admission to Church. It was thought that Jesus commanded baptism. St. Augustine believed that the stain of original sin was removed by Baptism. In its earlier days, Baptism was mainly for adults. It was about A.D. 600, the infant Baptism became the norm. In this way, in an emergency, any Christian may baptise. Because of the uncertainty about the consequence of post-baptismal sin, baptism was often deferred until the death-bed.

In Islam

Cutting off the foreskin or prepuce of males is practised as a religious rite by Jews as well as by Muhammedans. This practice is known as *Sunnat* or circumcision. *Sunnat* is the initiation ceremony in Islam. There is mention of this ceremony in *Guru Granth Sahib*. Guru Nanak Dev has asked a Muslim to make effort his circumcision. (Var Majh M. 1, p. 140). Kabir says, "If circumcision makes one a Muslim then what we can say of a woman?" (Asa Kabir, p. 477). It is also said that one becomes a Muslim by reciting *Kalima* or the preliminary prayer, which is ordinarily recited by a Muslim before every prayer.

Heaven and Hell

In Sikhism, Hinduism and Islam

Hindus and Muslims both believe in Heaven and Hell. According to Hinduism, there are several heavens and hells, which are differentiated according to the nature of *Karmas*. One reaps the fruit of his *Karmas* in heaven or hell. A description of hells is found in *Markandeya Purana*. After reaping the fruit of his actions in heaven, one is born again on earth as human being. The punishment in hell is followed by several births (may be thousands and lakhs) in animal kingdom on land and sea. In *Guru Granth Sahib* each birth and death has been considered a hell. One may be born as a four-legged animal, as a crawling serpent, as a flying bird, as a small insect and a being in water. All these lives are like hells. Thus the sinners undergo punishment in eighty-four lakhs of births (or hells) in accordance with their actions. (page 1028). The Muslims believe that on the last day of Judgment, God will send the faithful to heaven and the sinners to hell. There is a good deal of difference in the concepts of heaven and hell in Hinduism and Islam. The Sikh concept is different from the concepts of both these religions. A Sikh neither desires to go to heaven nor fears hell. (p. 337). He rejects both of them. (p. 969). According to *Guru Granth Sahib* one goes to heaven or hell because of ego (p. 278), and actions in the world of three *gunas* (qualities) (p. 385). The actions in the world of three *gunas* are both good and bad. Within the fold of ego, one can be

both truthful and sinful (p. 466), but a Sikh has to rise above both types of actions in order to escape transmigration (p. 126) and, therefore, he has to discard both heaven and hell.

The Indian equivalent for heaven is *Svarga*. Out of the fourteen worlds, seven upper and seven nether, which constitute the whole universe, *Svarga* or *Svah* is one of the seven upper worlds. According to the Hindu belief, one enjoys material happiness in this world, a reward for his meritorious actions on earth. It is the heaven of Indra and is supposed to be situated on Mount Meru. In the post Vedic Hindu mythology, *Vaikunth* is the name given to the heaven of Vishnu, which is eternal and is built of gold and precious stones. In the Sikh scripture both the words *Svarga* and *Baikunth* have been used, but the concept of such heaven has been rejected. The God-man (*Gurmukh*) does not want to reside in heaven. (Maru M. 5, p. 1078). For an enlightened person the holy congregation is a heaven. (Bhairo Kabir, p. 1161). Islam believes in seven heavens, through which the Prophet passed during nocturnal journey (*miraj*). These are : 1—The heaven of pure silver, where Adam resides, 2—The heaven of pure gold, where John the Baptist and Jesus reside, 3—the heaven of pearls belonging to Joseph, 4—the heaven of white gold of Enoch, 5—the heaven of silver of Aaron, 6—the heaven of ruby and garnet of Moses and 7—the heaven of Abraham. Heaven is also called *Jannat* by Muslims, a term used for the regions of celestial bliss. In the paradise, the faithful is served by beautiful damsels, called *houries*, with large dark eyeballs. The word *Bahisht* is used in the Sikh Scripture for Muslim heaven.

The Indian equivalent for the hell is *Narak*. It is a place of torture, where the souls of the evil persons are sent. Manu has enumerated twenty-one hells. Other authorities vary greatly regarding the number and the names of the hells. Twenty-eight different divisions of hell are described. They are said to be situated below *Patala*, where there is darkness and terror. They are particularly described in *Vishnu Purana*. These hells lie one above the other, each

having one hundred and forty-four sub-divisions. The keepers of these hells have the faces of jackals, cats, vultures, owls etc. These hells are not the places of eternal sufferings. After due punishment, the souls take birth according to their *Karmas*. The Muslims use the word *dozakh* for hell. Seven divisions of hell have been described in Muslim commentaries :

1—*Johannum*, the purgatorial hell, 2—*Laza*, blazing fire, 3—*Al-Hutamah*, intense fire, 4—*Saeer*, flaming fire, 5—*Saqar*, scorching fire, 6—*Al-Jahim*, huge hot fire and 7—*Hawiyah*, bottomless pit. Different types of souls categorised by their actions are sent to different hells. Both the words '*narak*' and '*dozakh*' have been used in the Sikh Scripture. Guru Nanak Dev says, "One is drowned in the well of hell (*narak*), the worshipper of *maya* passes through the hells of eighty-four lakh species." (Maru M. 1, p. 1028). Guru Arjan Dev says, "How can he be saved from hell (*dozakh*), who does not keep the Prophet in his mind. (Var Gauri M. 5, pp. 319-20).

In Judaism and Christianity

In the Jewish scripture, there is no doctrine of heaven and hell. We find there a growing concept of an ultimate resurrection of the dead on the last day of the Judgment. It is thus recorded in the scripture : "And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake, some to everlasting life and some to shame and everlasting contempt." Among the Christians, the Catholic belief specified Four Last things : Death, Judgment, Heaven and Hell. Two more beliefs may be added i.e. the Purgatory and the Resurrection of the body. At the end of the world, Christ will come again as Judge of all men. At that time, the souls of all men will be reunited with their bodies. Those who die in grave sin will be sent to hell and those who die in love and friendship of God, will enjoy for ever, the Love and grace of God. The sentence for the sinners is described thus : "Get ye away from me, ye curse into everlasting fire

which has been prepared for the devil and his angels." (Matt. 25:41). St. Augustine has described thus the life in Heaven : "Peace will be there, perfect peace will be there. Where thou wishest, thou shalt be, but from God thou wilt not depart. Where thou wishest thou shalt be, but wherever thou goest thou shalt have thy God. With Him, from whom thou art blessed, shalt thou ever be."

Ethics

(Virtue and Vice/Sin/Practice of Godly Qualities)

In Sikhism

The religion of Guru Nanak is the religion of householders. He has totally rejected the division of *varnas* (castes) and *ashramas* (stages of life) enjoined by Hindu Shastras. (p. 83). For him none is born great, none is inferior to the other; the walls and prejudices created in society are only man-made. He advocates the removal of all the social barriers between man and man, man and woman. The Guru's ideology has no place for asceticism and passivity. Activity is the keynote of Guru's philosophy and the basis of his ethics. The ethics and religion of Guru Nanak Dev are complimentary. They are the body and spirit of his thought. For a spiritual discipline, the code of conduct is a necessity. The ethics is the basis of spiritual edifice. Unless the virtues are imbibed, the seeker cannot move further on the spiritual plane. A balanced combination of action, knowledge and devotion is required. The Guru is against any kind of ritualism (Maru M. 1, p. 1024), because the final beatitude cannot be obtained through rituals. In this context all rituals are useless. All paths, which do not lead towards the Lord, are to be avoided. In this sense all the godly qualities are to be practised in life. God is Truth, Fearless, Devoid of enmity, Love, Pure, Just, Generous, Gracious, Sweet etc., therefore truthful living, fearlessness, friendliness, love,

purity, justice, generosity, graciousness, sweetness etc. can make us godlike. The qualities of God are innumerable. He is bestower of qualities, but there is none who can in turn give any quality to God.

The Guru believes that there are two kinds of actions i.e. good and bad. The doer cannot escape from reaping the fruit of his actions. He has to undergo punishment for his bad actions. (Var Asa M. 1, p. 470). If he rules the world with high-handedness and drifts away from the path of God, he will go to hell quite naked and will repent for his evil actions. (Var Asa M. 1, p. 471). The idea of hell is a clear warning for punishment for vices. The Charvaka hedonism has been rejected outright by the Guru. All the worldly pleasures enjoyed by our senses end in pain and misery. The pleasures create disease and the ensuing pain becomes the remedy. It proves a blessing in disguise (p. 469), because it puts us on the right path. The bodily and mental ills are cured with the expert advice. The Guru comes to our rescue. It is necessary to discriminate between the 'good' and the 'pleasant'. The 'good' is a pointer to spiritual life and the 'pleasant' to the mundane. The 'good' leads to self-realisation, which is the result of self-restraint (*sanjam*). Self-restraint may not be misunderstood for self-mortification as against self-indulgence. Self-mortification has been rejected by the Guru. Self-indulgence to a certain limit, is not bad. Lust, anger, greed, attachment and ego are bad in themselves, but their rightful use helps in spiritual advancement.

The thought, word and deed are the three significant factors which determine the moral standard of an individual. The thoughts which arise in the mind, manifest themselves either through speech or through bodily action; therefore the consideration of the moral standard rests on the behaviour exhibited through the body, speech and mind. The virtue or righteousness exhibited through the body, speech and mind is known as *Dharma* and evil or unrighteousness is called *Adharma*. The Guru has laid emphasis on adopting *Dharma*. (p. 518). All the actions or

vices based on *Adharma* are sins. The prominent vices connected with the body are : cruelty towards others in the act of the accumulation of wealth, the theft of wealth belonging to others and sexual misbehaviour. The body is quite careless about the real objective of its birth in this world. It passes the night in sleeping and the day in enjoying and thus the most precious opportunity in this birth is wasted. (Gauri M. 1, p. 156). The first virtue connected with the body is *Ahimsa*, or non-injury to living beings. The Guru is quite emphatic on this virtue. In order to rise higher on the spiritual plane, one should know within himself, the significance of mercy towards all and treat all the *jivas* like himself. (p. 940). The Guru has mentioned four fires : violence, attachment, greed and anger. All these fires are the result of ego, which is not liked by the Lord. The Guru advises the man of the world to keep away from the wealth and women of others, telling him clearly that greed and ego are poison and evil. (Malar M. 1, p. 1255), and that he should forsake fraudulent ways, calumny, lust and anger. (pp. 1255-56).

The virtuous action of the body is the service of others. Instead of keeping an eye on the wealth of others, one should help others from his honestly-earned income. (p. 1245). The foremost activity of the body should be to work hard for the welfare of the family and society. The duty of the head of the family is to work in order to fulfil the needs of his family and his own requirements. He should also share his earnings with the needy. The Guru says, "One should labour for one's requirements and should also give something in charity. He will thus recognise the way of the Lord." The help to others should be without any desire for remuneration. Charity without any expectation of reward is real charity. One should always be ready for social service for the good of humanity. The foremost aim of an ideal Sikh is the service of humanity.

The speech of an individual should be truthful and sweet. With harsh words the love dies down and the friendship ends (p. 9), therefore the Sikh should never talk

ill of anybody. (p. 473). The unrighteousness with respect to speech consists in practising falsehood, tartness of expression, calumny and gossiping. All these acts stand in the way of spiritual progress. The calumny is a great sin. (Gujri M. 1, p. 505). The righteousness with respect to speech consists in the practice of veracity, uttering of speech for the good of humanity, sweetness of utterance and the recitation of scriptures. All these acts are done for the good of individual soul and for the society. The recitation of scriptures is an act of faith. The sayings of the sages inspire us for higher ideals and nobler acts, thus paving the way for our spiritual enlightenment. The practice of listening and imbibing the spirit of the scriptures creates within us, the sacred fear of the Lord. (p. 25).

The mind is the pivot of worldly life. It is related to intellect. The prayer of a Sikh lays emphasis on the higher plane for intellect and lower for the mind, because the mind is mostly attracted towards the vices. The upper plane of intellect (right thinking) will obstruct vices from entering the plane of mind, being overshadowed by it. The mind, if let loose, can play havoc, and if kept under control, can raise us spiritually. These different states of mind have been depicted by the Guru in his works. The cure suggested for the malady of the mind is the Name of the Lord. By it the sins of the previous births are washed away. Metaphorically the mind is an elephant in the forest of the body. The Guru gives the goad (*ankush*) of the True Word. (p. 221). The five evils i.e. lust, anger, greed, attachment and ego surround the mind. These evils can be destroyed only with the Word of the Guru. The intellect should be kept unpolluted and above all sorts of quarrels. The right intellect should be a strong rider over the mind-horse, which is to be bridled and caught by the forelock. This intellect will lead us towards the Lord and we will be the recipients of honours. (p. 1245). Because of its company with the evils, the vices which originate in the mind, consist of ill-will towards others, greed in respect of what belongs to others and want of faith in the scriptures. Against these

vices the virtues of the mind are kindness towards others, indifference to material advantages and faith. Faith is the cause of reverence and piety.

In Hinduism

Hinduism is *Varnashrama Dharma*, a religion which believes in *varnas* (castes) and *ashramas*. The major castes are : Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra. The stages of life are *Brahmcharya Ashrama*, the first twenty-five years as a student practising celibacy, *Grihasthya Ashrama*, 26th to 50th year as a householder, *Vanaprastha Ashrama*, 51st to 75th year as a forest dweller and an anchorite and *Sannyasa Ashrama*, 76th to 100th year as a *Sannyasi* or renouncing individual. The rules laid down for each *varna* and *ashrama* are quite different from the others. Brahmins study Vedas and exercise spiritual powers, Kshatriyas are the warriors, who wield secular power. Vaishyas are artisans, cultivators etc. All these three castes are known as twice-born or *dvijas*. The fourth caste i.e. Shudras are to serve *dvijas*. They are not entitled to study Vedas, and they are very often categorised as untouchables. The code of Manu is the ethical code written by the sage Manu, in which he has mentioned the duties of all these castes in different stages of life. The code of Manu has twelve chapters and it touches most of the facets of life e.g. respectful obedience to teachers and parents, confessions and repentance, performance of sacrifices, the foods, which are allowed and forbidden, offences and penances etc. The duties of a woman are also described. Mention has also been made of the theories of *Karma* and transmigration. Different births are accrued on committing the evils by the body, mind and speech. The Dharma-Sutras give elaborate details on the rules of conduct and duties of men in different stages of life along with the rights and duties of the kings.

Hinduism is polytheistic and ritualistic. There are five Bhakti cults i.e. Vaishnavism, Shaivism, Shaktatism, Ganapatyaism and Sauryaism. Each of them has its own mode of worship. There are *Mantras*, *Yantras* and *Tantras*.

Various types of Yoga viz., Karma Yoga, Bhakti Yoga, Gyan Yoga, Raja Yoga, Hath Yoga, Tantra Yoga, Kundalini Yoga etc. are practised. The practice of image-worship is very common. Various gods and goddesses are worshipped. The cow is considered very important in Hinduism. In ancient times, the woman received great respect in society, but Manu declared her inferior to man. The practice of 'Sati' had remained prevalent in Hindu society for a long time.

The Hindu sages have mentioned thirteen vices, which are enemies of living beings. They are—lust, anger, greed, dejection, delusion, cynicism, wrongful activity, envy, jealousy, irritated worry, malice, scorn and fear. These vices can be conquered with increasing control over mind, body and senses. Side by side, they have talked of virtues, which are—forgiveness, self-possession, harmlessness, equality, truthfulness, straightforwardness, the conquest of senses, skill, gentleness, modesty, restfulness, absence of scorn, absence of excitement, sweet speech and absence of jealousy—of all these is self-control the source. (Mahabharata, Santi Parva). Manu talks of ten virtues : self-possession, patience, self-control, integrity, purity, restraint, intelligence, learning, truthfulness, absence of anger—these are the marks of *Dharma*. The Sikh Gurus also talk of all these virtues in an individual, but they are bitterly against any barrier of caste in the society. For them all the *Jivas* are equal and no barrier can be placed between a man and a man, a man and a woman. The performance of a vicious act is a sin. The concept of sin is related to the concept of *Karma*. The five major vices are—lust, anger, greed, attachment and ego. *Maya* creates duality, which is a grave sin.

In Buddhism

The Hindu belief in *Karma* has been accepted in Buddhism, but the soul does not travel from one birth to the other. Only the *Karma* itself travels. The destiny of the individual is governed by his actions, but the idea of transmigration in Buddhism is different from Hinduism.

The self in Buddhism is not the same as the soul in Hinduism. It is the aggregate of constantly changing factors. The Bodhisattava of Mahayana Buddhism consists of the perfection of morality along with the perfections of giving, patience, energy, meditation and wisdom. In Hinayana (Theravada) Buddhism, there is great emphasis on good works, which accommodate a number of social, ethical and religious activities. The good works include looking after parents and the old, sick and needy. Such works are usually indicated under threefold classification of *dana* (giving), *sila* (right conduct) and *bhavana* (meditation). The tenfold extensive classification includes : 1—gifts to the deserving, 2—the observance of precepts, 3—meditational practices, 4—offerings at shrines etc., 5—attending to the ailing persons, 6—gifts to the religious community, 7—sharing in one's religious merit, 8—hearing *dhamma*, 9—teaching *dhamma* and 10—straightening one's true perceptions.

The eightfold path of Buddhism is the path of morality, meditation and wisdom. It may be elaborated as under :

1. Right understanding of the impermanence of life;
2. Right Thought with pure mind, devoid of lust, ill-will and cruelty;
3. Right Speech avoiding falsehood, calumny, harsh words and gossip;
4. Right Action not to commit murder and sexual misbehaviour, avoid false speech and intoxicants and to practise love, charity, purity, generosity, honesty, truthfulness and self-discipline;
5. Right Vocation, not to harm or injure others;
6. Right Effort, preventing vices and imbibing virtues;
7. Right Mindfulness with awareness of the correct functions of body and mind; and
8. Right Concentration for the disciplined meditation.

There are ten guiding precepts; Five apply to all Buddhists :

1. Abstinence from destroying life,

2. Abstinence from stealing,
3. Abstinence from impurity,
4. Abstinence from falsehood and
5. Abstinence from intoxicants.

Three Precepts apply to *Bhikshus* (monks) and some pious lay-people :

1. Abstinence from eating at forbidden times,
2. Abstinence from dancing, singing and seeing spectacles, and
3. Abstinence from garlands, scents, unguents, ornaments and finery.

Two Precepts apply only to *Bhikshus* :

1. Abstinence from high or broad beds, and
2. Abstinence from accepting gold or silver.

In Judaism

According to Judaism, man is created in the image of God. Whereas God loves Justice and Mercy, the man, in order to be true to his divinity, should practise these virtues. Though there are temptations to evil in the world, man should always follow the path of piety and never renounce the world. The man has been given free will, therefore he cannot place the responsibility for his own misdeeds upon God. Man is also responsible to society for the well-being of all men. His proper response to life is piety and reverence not only before God, but also before other men. The essential rule of conduct for man is the imitation of God. No asceticism is required of him; instead he has to pass every moment of life in the awareness of God. The rabbinic values in Judaism find expression in several 'ethical Wills'. We reproduce below some sentences from one of the Wills:

"Do not rush into an argument. Beware of oppressing other men, whether by money or by word; neither envy nor hate them. Keep far from oaths and from the inquiry of vows, from frivolity and anger which confuse both the

spirit and the mind of man. Do not use the Name of God for vain purposes or in foul places. Do not serve for the sake of being rewarded when you perform His (God's) commandments, and do not avoid sin out of fear of punishment. Serve in love...Do not raise your hand against your neighbour. Neither slander nor give false reports of any person. Do not rush to give an insolent answer to those who say unpleasant things to you...Enjoy neither food nor drink without reciting a blessing before and after...The sin of taking interest is so great that whoever commits it, is considered as though he denied the God of Israel...If you delve into the matter, you will realise that the world was created for man's use. Surely the fate of the world depends upon the conduct of man..."

Sin is rebellion against God. Punishment is chastisement, as a father chastises his children to remind them of their proper dignity and character.

In Christianity

In its earlier years Christianity was considered as a communion of saints characterised by moral purity. According to the scripture, man is created in the image of God. Man is first of all a creature of God and is dependent on God in both being and action. He is a creature composed of body and soul and has been made in the image and likeness of God. In order to bring to fulfilment, the image of God in himself, the man must realise his destiny and achieve happiness. The moral duty of man is to respond to the good in the law of God, which ultimately brings happiness. The comprehension and fulfilment of God's law is the measure of man's conduct. God's Will is the standard by which all human actions must meet the test of their rightness and wrongness. Man has been endowed by God with intelligence. The human intelligence, when rightly used, will help to discover fundamental spiritual truths and moral principles. The basic truths that are learnt, are the existence of a personal God and the immortality of man's

soul. Consequently he realises the responsibility of the soul towards the Creator. He has to imbibe the qualities of justice, benevolence, temperance and fortitude. He has also to understand the need for a code of sexual morality within his society. In his *Sermon On The Mount*, Jesus's eight beatitudes outline the basis of Christian attitudes inherent in God's Kingdom. These Beatitudes are as follows :

1. Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.
2. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.
3. Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.
4. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness for they shall be satisfied.
5. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.
6. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.
7. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.
8. Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.

Blessed are you when men revile you and persecute you and all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in Heaven, for so men persecuted the prophets who were before you.

(Matthew 5 : 3-12)

In Islam

Fiqh, *Shari'a* or the Law emanates from the Quran, where God is seen as Commanding and Forbidding, Rewarding and Punishing. The word *Islam* means submission to the Will of God and this Will of God is a matter of primary concern for the Muslims. The first section of the *Fiqh* is concerned with the laws governing man's conduct towards God. They contain the acts of worship or obedience demanded of a Muslim. These are; prayer, fasting, almsgiving, pilgrimage and the profession of faith. They are known as the five pillars of Islam. The next section of

Fiqh deals with the laws governing human relations, such as marriage, divorce, fosterage etc.

The Law also orders men to perform good works and reject those which are reprehensible. The Muslims are enjoined to adopt right behaviour and desist from taking wrong action. This is the essence of Islamic Ethics (the *hisba*). The first order of the *hisba* is prohibition, the second admonition and the third deterring and restraining. Among the reprehensible things, some are positively tabu (*haram*) and some are disapproved (*makruh*). According to Islam, every occurrence in life, whether good or bad, has been determined long in advance by the immutable Order of God. This concept is called predestination. The Muslims believe that Allah is also the Creator of evil and the human beings have no free-will. Therefore, in Islam, the life is faced with an innate fatalism. The concept of submission emanates from the belief in the judgment day. This day of reckoning is the focal point in the *Quran* and other writings of Islam. There is a warning that the vices will be balanced against virtues. The evil-doer is destined to fall into the fire of hell and the virtuous will go to the sensuous paradise. Islam stresses the need for correct external behaviour and righteous action. One controversial issue in Islamic practice is that of polygamy. A Muslim is allowed upto four wives, if he treats them equally. The Muslims can eat only ritually killed and prepared meat. Gambling is strictly prohibited. He must not collect interest on the invest money. Muslim women do not go out in public without wearing the veil. Image-worship is strictly prohibited in Islam. When a Muslim is fasting, he has to abstain completely from eating and drinking from sunrise to sunset.

Martyrdom

The Concept of Martyrdom

The concept of martyrdom emanates from the concept of waging holy wars. In crevice societies, the authority is created by martyrdom, which causes the escalation of the struggle and solidarity of the minority. If the society is politically crevice, it wages the war for self-determination, and for social and cultural freedom. In a self-determining society, we find a galaxy of many heroic martyrs.

The word prevalent for a martyr in India is *Shahid*, which connotes, one who is present as a witness. *Ash-Shahid-ul-Kamil* or perfect martyr is considered one, who is killed in a religious war. The word *Shahid* is an Arabic word. It was given a wide interpretation in Muslim India. In *Qanoon-i-Islam* by Shreef, different ways for the attainment of martyrdom are mentioned which include the death while reciting prayers, death at the hands of robbers, death by lightning, death by drowning or falling in a dry well. But one who died in the defence of his faith was considered a perfect martyr. In Sikhism, the word *Shahid* was adopted in the sense of a perfect martyr. The Muslims who died in battle with infidels or Hindus were considered *Shahids*. But in Sikhism, there is a wider connotation for the word *Shahid*. A Sikh who suffers death by refusing to renounce his faith, religion, tenet or principle or its practice, is a *Shahid*. He seals his testimony for his faith with his blood.

In Sikhism

Bhai Gurdas, the great Sikh theologian, while defining a true disciple, describes him as a martyr in endurance and faith having ended all his illusions and fears. Once the Sikhs asked Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth Guru, "O True King ! whom should we call martyrs ? Kindly tell us the nature of their work." The Guru smiled and said, "You have put a question regarding a confidential matter, O Sikhs ! The Guru keeps his people in his presence. He protects his disciples. The present is the dreadful Iron Age. The Guru is like a shepherd who cautions and scares away his followers. The Guru goads his Sikhs according to his will. If the Sikh has full faith, he is a hero of the field and crosses the world ocean. The cowards are fettered in transmigration. The Guru shall wait along with his people. Whatever the martyrs desire, is fulfilled. God has placed many of them in responsible positions. They wander in all the *dvipas* and *khandas* (continents and regions), but are never led astray. They see the sport of *maya*, but are not subject to transmigration. The Guru is there to protect them. He protects them like a shepherd."

A Galaxy of Heroic Martyrs in Sikhism

The first two martyrs were the Gurus themselves. The fifth Sikh Guru, Guru Arjan Dev, was the first martyr in Sikh History. The Mughal emperor Jehangir had himself ordered his death with tortures. He wrote in his *Tuzuk* : "So many of the simple-minded Hindus, many foolish Muslims too, had been fascinated by his ways and teachings. He was noised about as a religious and worldly leader. They called him Guru, and from all directions crowds of fool-world came to him and expressed great devotion to him. This busy traffic had been carried on for the three or four generations. For years the thought had been presenting itself to my mind that either I should put an end to this false traffic, or he should be brought into the fold of Islam... ..I fully knew his heresies, and I ordered that he should be

brought into my presence, that his property be confiscated, and that he should be put to death with tortures." It is said that the Guru was handed over to Chandu Sha'h, who had also become inimical towards him because of a private matter. The adversary subjected the Guru to various kinds of torture. Hot sand was poured over his body and he was made to sit on a hot iron-plate. The blistered body of the Guru was then put in the cold waters of the Ravi, which 'carried it away to its final rest'. This first martyrdom gave more strength to the Sikh movement.

The second martyr in Sikh History was the ninth Sikh Guru, Guru Tegh Bahadur. The Mughal emperor Aurangzeb tried to convert him to Islam, but the Guru remained steadfast on his principles. He gave his life in order to protect the freedom of the Hindu religion. In the words of Guru Gobind Singh, "He (Guru Tegh Bahadur), protected the forehead mark and sacred thread of the Hindus, which marked great event in the Iron Age. For the sake of saints, he laid down his head without even a sigh. For the sake of *Dharma* (righteousness) he sacrificed himself; he laid down his head, but not his creed. The saints of the Lord abhor the performance of miracles and malpractices. Breaking the pot of his body on the head of the king of Delhi (Aurangzeb), he left for the Abode of the Lord. None could perform such a feat. The whole world bemoaned the departure of Tegh Bahadur; while the world lamented, the gods hailed his arrival in heaven." This martyrdom further strengthened the Sikh movement. The Sikhs arrested with the Guru were also subjected to severe tortures. Bhai Mati Das was sawed alive and Bhai Dayala was boiled in a huge cauldron.

The first martyr of the eighteenth century was the tenth Guru, Guru Gobind Singh, the founder of the Khalsa. His mother and his four sons, the forty saved ones and many others in his battle with the Mughal forces became martyrs. Banda Singh Bahadur and many other Sikhs were mercilessly martyred in Delhi in 1716. As regards Banda Singh himself, he was deprived first of his right eye, then his left eye, after which his hands and feet were cut off. His flesh

was torn with red-hot pincers and in the end his head was chopped off.

The persecution of the Sikhs continued throughout the eighteenth century. There were martyrdoms of Tara Singh of Van, Bhai Mani Singh, Bhai Taru Singh, Mehtab Singh of Mirankot, Subeg Singh and Shahbaz Singh. Bhai Mani Singh's body was hacked to pieces, limb by limb. The scalp of Bhai Taru Singh was scraped off. Sardar Mehtab Singh, Subeg Singh and Shahbaz Singh were publicly broken on the wheel. There were two holocausts, in which thousands of Sikhs sacrificed themselves. The sacrifices of Sikh ladies are also remarkable.

No Tradition of Martyrdom in Buddhism

Buddhism and Jainism both strongly believed in *Ahimsa Parmo Dharma* i.e. non-injury to all living beings, therefore, they did not wage wars. Hence they have no concept of martyrdom.

No concept of Holy wars in Hinduism and no tradition of Martyrdom

There are several incidents and events of valour and heroism in Hindu History. The martial tribes of Rajputs and Marathas fought several battles against the Muslim expansionists. Some incidents of *Jauhar*, of course, verge on martyrdom, wherein we find the brave Rajput women burning themselves in fire in order to save their honour from the advancing forces of the enemy.

In Judaism

The Jews were a crescive society in the second century B.C. They were politically powerless, but were beginning to stir. Their resistance to hellenization under the Seleucid ruler Antiochus Epiphanes in an early model of martyrdom. The elderly Eleazar is the martyr, who chose to sacrifice his life rather than eat pork in the desecrated temple in Jerusalem. In the eleventh century, the Jews of Mainz, who

were on the verge of being slaughtered by the Crusaders, slew their family members and then themselves. The ideology and law of a minority community is sanctified with martyrdom. In *Mekhilta*; a Jewish interpretation work, it is written that every commandment for which the Jews sacrifice their lives, will be established among them. The self-determining society produces heroic martyrs and such martyrs help in achieving the political control by the community. An example of this is the *Yishuv*, the Jewish community of Palestine during the 1920s, led by Va'ad Le'umi, the National Council. Martyrdom is latent in a decaying society. The victims of the Holocaust are remembered as martyrs by the Jewish leaders, because by their sacrifice, they sanctified God's Name. The Jewish resistance performed independently or in co-operation with other partisans, produced genuine martyrs, but the officials of the Judenrat (the Jewish Council of the ghetto) did not support this claim.

In Christianity

Christians within the Roman Empire were a politically crescive minority. They suffered martyrdom passively. Though they were greatly tortured, they could only put moral and psychological pressure on the adversary. The ideal of Christian martyrdom is the trial and crucifixion on Golgotha, which is related in the Gospels. Subsequent martyrs strive to imitate Christ. The self-determining society of fourth century Christians in Asia Minor produced heroic martyrs following the victory of Constantine. Ignatius of Antioch, seeking martyrdom, pleaded with his fellow-Christians in Rome not to try to rescue him, but instead to allow him to die. At the same time, some Christian Bishops even denied their relation with Christianity and ran away in order to avoid the proceedings of the Court. Majority of the martyrs are male martyrs, but there were female martyrs also, who died affirming family principles. In the third century, Barbara, Catholic virgin

martyr, who is said to have been a follower of Origen, was imprisoned in a tower and later on beheaded by her father, when he came to know of her conversion to Christianity. Similarly during the reign of Marcus Aurelius, Cecilia died as a martyr along with her husband, whom she had converted. By the end of the second century, a Christian cult of the martyr exhibited the relics of a martyr on the anniversary of the martyrdom.

In Islam

In its early centuries, the expansionist Islam exemplified the self-determining society. Its martyrs were very active and belligerent. There were several heroic martyrs in eighth century Damascus of the Umayyad caliphate. There is very little written record about the Muslim martyrs executed by Arab pagans. But the record about the Islamic martyrs of internecine conflict is very clear. During the crecive and self-determining periods, there were Muslim martyrs killed by the Muslims themselves, who belonged to different Islamic sects. The available historic example is that of the Prophet's grandson Husayn, the son of Ali who was slain by the soldiers of Yazid, the son of the caliph Mu'awiyah, in order to prevent Husayn's accession to the caliphate. This martyrdom is commemorated every year with imitative suffering by the Shi'a sect. A Muslim is forbidden to wish for death or for an encounter with the adversary. The Islamic jurist consider the *talab al-shahadah*, the seeking of martyrdom even on the battlefield, as very close to suicide. In Islam, the *jihad* is a religious obligation and the martyr (the *Shahid*) is one, who dies in this sacred battle. Mahmud Shaltut, a recent Shaykh al-Azhar, allows the Muslim Community to declare *jihad* for three reasons viz., 1—to repel aggression, 2—to protect the mission of Islam and 3—to defend religious freedom, that is the freedom of Muslims to practise their faith in non-Muslim countries.

Mysticism

The Sikh Mysticism of Grace and Love

Sikhism is a discipline, which when observed completely, leads to the union with the Lord Almighty. The ethical qualities play a great part in the spiritual uplift. The wash away all the dirt gathered on the physical and mental planes and tend to make the mind and body pure. The purity is a pre-requisite for spiritual awakening. It brings self-realisation. Guru Nanak Dev believed in the certitude of some means of arriving at the Ultimate Reality. He was opposed to all kinds of sacraments, therefore the sacramental mysticism of the Vedas did not fall in with his line of thought. He laid emphasis on the inner significance of a ritual or a symbol. Four types of mysticism i.e. the mysticism of grace, the mysticism of love, pantheistic mysticism and nature mysticism come within the broader orbit of Sikh mysticism. The mysticism of grace plays a vital role in Sikh religion. Guru Nanak Dev says, "The body takes its birth because of *karmas*, but the final emancipation is attained through the Grace of the Lord." (Japu, p. 2). None can influence the Lord for His Gifts. A person, while awake, may not receive them, but a sleeping person may be awakened and gifts may be bestowed upon him. (Var Sri Raga M. 4, p. 83). The Lord resides within every *Jiva* and does not take advice of anyone for bestowing His Grace. (Asa M. 1, p. 412).

Man is sinful and God is Gracious. Thus there is a gulf

which exists between the nature of man and the Nature of God. The gulf can only be bridged by the Grace of the Lord. Since *Jiva* is weak and helpless (Var Asa M. 1, p. 469), it bows and prays before the Almighty. The prayer kills the ego of the individual. The repentance shown in the prayer purifies the mind and this is the beginning of the Grace. The fear of the Lord occupies the mind. It is not fear in the ordinary sense, it is the indescribable awe of the Lord Almighty. (Suhi M. 4, p. 773). This fear brings us under the discipline of the preceptor. The life of love and devotion begins. (Gujri M. 1, p. 505). This phase of mysticism is known as the mysticism of love. God is Love. He reciprocates our love with open arm. In this case Godhead becomes intensely personal like a human beloved. The poetry of Guru Nanak Dev is characterised by the exuberance of love for the Lord. The Lord is Lovable and Kind. Though the Lord of the Guru is *Nirguna* or Unmanifested, the Love for Him is manifested in several ways.

The mystic love is identical with devotion. The bride is whole-heartedly devoted towards the Lord. The Fear of the Lord makes her devotion stronger and love brighter. There can be no love and devotion without the Fear of the Lord. The Guru has mentioned the love for the Lotus-Feet of the Lord. (Ramkali M. 1, p. 932). The veneration of the Lotus-Feet results in the destruction of ego. All the evils are shed away with the exuberance of love. But whosoever desires to follow the path of love, he has to carry his head on the palm of his hand. (Shalok Varan te Vadhik M. 1, p. 1412). Guru Nanak Dev bows before such a person, who has Truth in his heart and within that Truth love resides. The state of *Sahaj* is realised by that person by following the discipline of the Guru, which lays emphasis on the remembrance of the Name of the Lord. The Guru and the Name occupy a very important place in the Sikh mysticism of love. (Sri Raga M. 1, p. 60). The Guru is one who unites every separated soul with the Lord. The Name is the Word given by the Guru. If the Word of the Guru is repeated with complete devotion and surrender, the Lord meets the

devotee and a permanent union is attained. (Var Majh M. 1, p. 138). Ethical qualities are necessary for spiritual development. Continence, patience, Fear of the Lord, love etc. are pre-requisites for the retention of the Name of the Lord within the human body.

The devotee of Guru Nanak Dev has to live the life of a householder and has also to remain unattached. He has to perform all his worldly duties, but has to focus his attention on the Lord. He has to become like a lotus, which is born and bred in water, but remains unaffected by it. (Ramkali M. 1, p. 938). He rejects *mantras*, *yantras* and *tantras*, the prevalent modes of self-realisation. He is a Yogi and his Yoga is a balanced combination of *Karma*, *Bhakti* and *Gyan*. *Hath-Yoga* is totally rejected. His Yoga is known as *Nam-Yoga*, *Surt-Shabad-Yoga* or *Sahaja Yoga*. He is a *Bhakta* but there can be no *Bhakti* (devotion) without the qualities. His *Bhakti* is *Bhao Bhakti* or *Prema Bhakti*, i.e. devotion through love. The *Sadh Sangat* or the company of the saints has a significant role to perform in his spiritual development. He is required to join the holy congregation everyday in order to understand and practise the discipline ordained by the Guru. (Asa M. 1, p. 414). Through gradual practice of the discipline, the devotee attains final emancipation, which is called *Param Pad*, *Chautha Pad* or *Turiya*. (Gauri M. 1, p. 154).

Another type of mysticism, which we find in most of the religions in one form or the other, is pantheistic mysticism. Pantheism is explained as 'God is all'. The Guru says, "He who is the cause of everything, pervades everywhere." (p. 433). "Wherever I go, Thou Art there, O True Creator !" (p. 438). "Thou art the wooden tablet, Thou art the pen and Thou art the writing. There is only one, O Nanak ! and no second." (p. 1291). The Guru believes in the All-Pervasive Lord. The pantheistic mysticism, however, emphasises that God and man are one. The line of thought taken by Shankara that 'Man is God' in his famous saying *Tat Tavam Asi* has not been accepted by the Guru, because in this case, when man is Brahman himself, there is no need for efforts

towards the unification of man and God. A discipline believing in love and grace can never accept 'SO HAM' (I am He). This line of pantheistic mysticism does not find favour with Guru Nanak Dev. He agrees with the ideal of searching the path of unity with Brahman. He does not deny the existence of matter as Shankara does. For him the world is real and the weaknesses of man are also real. The man has to remove his failings and come under a discipline in order to achieve final emancipation.

Another type of mysticism is nature mysticism. Shri C. Jinarajasa writes in his book entitled *The Nature of Mysticism*: "To the pantheist, nature is a veil over the great reality, to nature-mystic she is real and not an illusion... everywhere he sees according to his temperament and mood, rhythm, order, beauty, love and beneficent law, he needs no faith or doctrine to guide him to God, for he communes with God as he contemplates Nature." Guru Nanak Dev says, "I bow with devotion to the Lord, who lives in Nature." (p. 469). "After creating Nature, He lives in it." (p. 84). "He has created the throne of Nature." (p. 580). "The mind is satisfied after seeing Nature." (p. 1043). A hymn of Guru Nanak Dev in Var Asa clarifies his concept of Nature. In another hymn, he says, "Thou art in water, on plains and within the earth and sky and pervades everywhere." (pp. 730-31). However the mysticism of Guru Nanak Dev is mainly the mysticism of love.

The Hindu Mysticism of the Self

Originally, the Vedic religion laid emphasis on sacrifice and rite, through which the gods could be appeased, therefore it could be called the sacramental mysticism. In the Upanishadic era, from eighth to fifth century B.C., the spiritual tendencies manifested themselves eventually in the idea of an inner soul (*atman*) or the Self, which pervaded everywhere as Brahman. The Sankhya-Yoga system mentioned two principles of reality, i.e. *Prakriti* the material

principle, which was considered as source of energy and *Purusha*, which is pure consciousness, similar to the *atman* of the Upanishads. *Purushas* are innumerable, therefore Sankhya-Yoga system has no place for the idea of One *Atman* pervading the whole universe. The bondage of *Prakriti* can only be ended and the liberation achieved through concentrated effort. It was Ramanuja, who abandoned the metaphysical assumption of the monist tradition and reaffirmed the traditional concept of God endowed with personal attributes (*Saguna*). He manifested Godman a redeemer, who helps the soul regarding the achievement of liberation.

The Buddhist Mysticism of Emptiness (Shunya)

Whereas in Hinduism, there is quest for the Self as Brahman; in Buddhism, there is obliteration of the Self (*anatman/anatta*—no soul). Both desire to attain salvation through enlightenment. There is a quest for unified state of mind. The goal of enlightenment is conceived in different ways. The development varies from Hinayana to Mahayana doctrines. The eightfold path of Hinayana Buddhism concludes with 'right concentration', which in turn must be obtained in eight successive forms of mental discipline (the *dhyanas*). The Nagarjuna's Madhyamika school describes enlightenment through a state of utmost emptiness by three negative terms viz., non-attainment, non-assertion and non-reliance. In Hinayana schools, emptiness appears as the principal quality of *nirvana*, the supreme enlightenment. There is also emphasis on emptiness in Mahayana schools. According to Zen Buddhism, the final state of emptiness results not in a withdrawal from the real, but in an enhanced ability to see the real.

The Jewish Concept of Eschatological Mysticism

The eschatological mysticism is a dominant trend of Jewish mysticism. There are also other forms of mysticism, which are unlike to any other; they are so variant among

themselves that they have no common characteristics. But there are many Jewish mystics, in whose writings the eschatological nature of mystical knowledge is of paramount importance. Mysticism around the eschatological theme began in the first centuries of the common era. The eschatological element often gnostically influenced mythical speculation on Ezekiel's vision of the throne-chariot the *merkavah*. *Merkavah* mysticism declined after the seventh century. This mysticism had been esoteric. *Hasidism* (from *hasid*, 'pious one') began in the twelfth century as a popular movement. It was closely connected with law. The eschatological element in it became gradually strong. There are various other elements, which include religious virtues of simplicity, humility and indifference. Whereas the goal was achieved by *merkavah* mysticism through contemplation, *hasidi* achieved it by prayer and spiritual practice. There are gnostic traits in *merkavah* mysticism. The *hasidic* theology shows a resemblance to Neoplatonism. God's glory is distinct from God's being as a first manifestation of His presence, which mediates between this hidden Essence and the fully manifest creation. The Hasidism indulged in elaborate speculation about the inner and outer glory of God, and about the kingdom of His created yet hidden presence. These daring speculations seldom developed into a coherent theology. In that respect they differed from the spiritual movement that, from the fourteenth century on, would largely replace it—Qabbalah. It was deeply influenced by gnostic theologies. Its master-work, the *Zohar*, by its daring adoption of gnostic cosmogonies surpassed in this respect even *merkavah* mysticism. In addition, it absorbed the Neoplatonic currents that had swept through the Arabic and Jewish culture of twelfth and thirteenth century Spain. Wholly different, the theophysical mysticism that resulted in that unsurpassed masterpiece of mystical speculation, the *Zohar* (Book of Splendor). Its origin remains mysterious.

Mysticism of the Image of early Christianity

Biblical speculations on the Word of God are reinterpreted as expressions of God's personal revelation in an incarnated divine Logos. The intimate union with the Father and the Word is, through the Holy Spirit, granted to all believers. Indeed, the presence of the Spirit entitles them to the same love with which God loves His Son. The tenor of early Christian mysticism was determined by the New Testament and by trends in Hellenistic Judaism. A third factor, usually referred to as Neoplatonism must be added. The first attempt at a systematic theology of the mystical life in Christ was written by Plotinus' fellow Alexandrian and co-disciple Origen. Since the finite subject conveys nothing positive to the image but rather obscures it by its limitations. Only God's unlimited self-expression in His eternal Word (the Son) is His perfect image.

Modern Christian Mysticism of Love

During the twelfth century, Christian piety underwent a basic change; its approach to God became more human and affective. Love had, of course, always been an essential ingredient. But now it became the whole thing. The emphasis on love is part of a more general tendency to involve the entire personality in the religious act. The humanization of man's relation to God transforms man's attitude toward a creation in which God now comes to be more intimately present. An interpersonal and hence more creaturely relation to God is ready to accept each creature on its own terms and for its own sake. In this respect its attitude differs essentially from the image mysticism that holds the creature worthy of spiritual love only in its divine core, where it remains rooted in God. The love mysticism also cherishes its finite, imperfect being, which resulting from a divine act of creation, is endowed with a sacred quality of its own.

Islamic and Sufi-istic Mysticism of Love

The orthodox Islam is not the fertile soil for intensive personal experience of the Love of God, yet it assumes *Shariat* (the way) into a privileged communal relation with God. According to the Muslim scripture, besides the ordinary believers, who practise *Shari'ah*, there are some whom God communicates His essential mystery. In this sense; the Prophet allows for the possibility of a realm of personal religion. The possibility soon became a reality and ultimately flowered into unparalleled mystical beauty. Even the authority of the scripture has indirectly contributed to Islam's mystical wealth.

Most Islamic mysticism may be characterised as love mysticism. Several texts show an amazing similarity in spirit and even expression with later Christian mysticism. The similarity of thought can be seen in the poetic passages of Rabi'ah and also of John of the Cross and Shaykh al-Jur. Rabi'ah wrote some of the purest mystical love poetry. After the fifteenth century, Persian mysticism produced no great writers.

Sainthood

In Sikhism

In Indian Literature, the word *Sant* has been used for a saint. Etymologically, it is derived from *Sat*, which means Truth. Therefore a truthful person is a saint. Since a Gursikh (or Sikh) walks on the Path of Truth, he is a saint and the congregation of which he is a member, is therefore called *Sat Sangat*, which is the school of the True Guru, where he gets training in godly qualities. (Var Kanra M. 4, p. 1316). According to Guru Arjan Dev, "The True Guru is the ocean of pearls and one attains it according to his Writ. The Sikhs like swans gather together in accordance with the Will of the True Guru. The ocean is full of gems and pearls, the swans eat them, but the ocean always remains full. The Lord Wills that the ocean and the swans are not separated. Only that Sikh comes to the Guru, on whose forehead the Writ is recorded from the very beginning. Such a Gursikh not only ferries across the world-sea himself, but also saves his family and the whole world. (Var Ramkali M. 5, p. 960). Guru Nanak Dev has elaborated the quality of a saint, whom he calls *Gurmukh*, in the following way :

"A *Gurmukh* performs triple function of *Nam* (he remembers the Name of the lord), *Dan* (he gives in charity to the deserving and the needy) and *Isnan* (takes physical and mental bath). He remains concentrated in *Sahaj* (the supreme spiritual state). He receives honours in the Court of the Lord. He is eminent and remover of fear. He remains

under the discipline of the Guru and makes others follow this discipline. He unites others with the Lord. He has the knowledge of all religious texts (*Shastras*, *Smritis* and *Vedas*). He knows the secret of every heart. He is without enmity and rises above all worldly accounts. He remains saturated with the Name of the Lord and realises Him. The cycle of his births and deaths has ended and he receives honours in the Court of the Lord. He recognises the good and the bad. He attains the state of *Sahaj*. He is absorbed in the praises of the Lord's Court and is free from any bondage. He receives the Name of the Transcendent Lord and with the Word he burns away the ego. He sings the Praises of the True Lord and remains merged in Him. With the True Name, he receives high honours and gets knowledge of the whole world. He concentrates on the True Word, and the True *Bani* manifests through him. Rare are the persons who know the ecstatic state of their minds. He abides in his own spiritual home. He is a Yogi, who knows the method of Yoga and knows none else except the Lord. He conquers the mind by destroying the ego and is always absorbed in Truth. He conquers the world by defeating and driving away *Yama*. He never faces defeat in the Court of the Lord. He knows the Lord and unites others with Him. He recognises the Word. (Ramkali M. 1, Siddh Goshta).

The *Sant* or a True Sikh may be called a *Gurmukh*, *Sadh*, *Jivan-mukta* or *Brahm-Giani*. Because under the instructions of the Guru he becomes an adept, a saint, a *Sadh* or a realiser of Brahman, while being alive. The saints are the cream of the society, whose touch melts the hardest of hearts. (Kanra M. 4, p. 1295). Whoever comes in their contact, forgets all jealousies. (Kanra M. 5, p. 1299). He is the friend of all and has no enemy. (Kanra M. 5, p. 1299). In the company of these best men, one becomes like them; he casts off all the evils, while taking in all the qualities. (Nat M. 4, p. 976). Kabir says, "The saint does not cast away his saintliness, though he comes across millions of wicked people. The sandal-tree does not give up its coolness, though it is

surrounded by snakes." (Shalok Kabir, p. 1373).

In Hinduism

The Classical Vedic tradition focussed on the priest performance of the sacrifices and the rites and not on individuals. Still the ancient *rishis* (seers) and composers of vedic hymns were highly venerated. During the period of Vedic criticism and re-interpretation, some other personalities like Shankara in the ninth century and Ramanuja in the twelfth century were highly revered. But it was during the Bhakti Movement, when the worship of gods and goddesses and the incarnation of gods became prevalent, the religious preceptor (guru) was considered a saint. He was a teacher as well as a model for the devotees. Some of the inspired devotees, who composed and sang their hymns in praise of their Deity were honoured as saints like Alvar and Adyar saints in the South and traditional as well as radical saints in the north. Some of the radical saints, whose verses have been included in *Guru Granth Sahib* are Namdev, Kabir, Ravidas etc. In modern times, some of the noteworthy names are Shri Ramakrishna, Paramhansa, Aurobindo Ghosh and Mahatma Gandhi.

In Buddhism

In Hinayana, the *arahant* is acclaimed as the acme of human perfection and in Mahayana Buddhism, *bodhisattava* is the model of sainthood. In Hinayana Buddhism, the seeker renounces the life of a householder. For his release from suffering and rebirth, he achieves the final stage of the monastic quest as an *arahant*. He is the world renouncing saint. But the path of *bodhisattava* is open to all people. The seekers practice six perfections i.e. giving, morality, patience, vigour, meditation and wisdom. Such persons can be assured of eventual enlightenment. The *bodhisattava* is a saint, who eagerly helps others along the path.

In Judaism

Rabbinic Judaism reveres the exemplary figures like

Moses, rabbinic sages like Hillel and martyrs like Aqiva, but above all others it honours the scholar, who through his learning and righteousness not only sanctifies himself, but also his community. Though talmudic rabbis did not like the veneration of human beings, but the popular sentiment was against this notion. People went on a pilgrimage to visit the graves of famous ancient and mediaeval rabbis. Mystical groups greatly adored their leaders. The modern revivalist movement of Hasidism focussed on the intercessory powers of the *tsaddiqim*. This movement had a great appeal for the Jews. The *tsaddiqim* (the priest wonder-work), the Besht and some of his disciples and descendants functioned for their followers as living, personal embodiments of *Torah* (law). In the 'court' of the *tsaddiq* (Just man), the hasid (disciple) found a warm and fervent piety and a person who understood his innermost thoughts and needs. The *tsaddiq* could intercede with God on behalf of his followers and raised them to spiritual heights. Contemporary Jewish sainthood is represented by the *tsaddiq*.

In Christianity

In the history of Christianity, the recognition of certain people as holy men began very early. The martyrs were the first persons to be called the 'saints' (*hagios*). The Martyr was considered as model of imitating Christ by submitting to death. He possessed extraordinary powers. Prayers were held at his tomb for the cures of ills, protection from enemies and forgiveness of sins. When martyrdom was on the wane, the ascetics and monks took their place. They were considered to have imitated Christ by suffering. In the thirteenth century, the mendicant orders promoted the saintly ideal of active service in the world. The stress was laid on the miraculous powers, who healed, exorcised, prophesied and mastered the elements of nature. Saints are venerated in icons and pictures. In the sixteenth century, Martin Luther ridiculed the veneration of saints as, idolatry maintaining a belief in the exemplary value of some saints.

He denied their intercessory efficacy.

In Islam

The monotheism of Islam abhors and forbids the association of anyone with God except only the Prophet Muhammad, who is God's spokesman. In the *Quran* the word *Wali* (plural—*Aulia*) is used to refer both to God and God's 'friends'. These 'friends' are the pious people in general. But the popular Islam recognised *wali* as 'saint', who is a particular kind of friend of God. Such persons were sanctified in Islam as vehicles for the popular transmission of the scriptural faith. A saint in Islam is not necessarily an ascetic or a man of learning; the sainthood comes through a spontaneous enrapturing by God. The spiritual rank of a saint is lower than a Prophet. Though the Islamic theologians recognise the saint and their miraculous powers, they were against the pilgrimages to their graves. The best illustrations of sainthood are the Sufi masters, who modelled the mystical path for their disciples and guided them along its stages. The stages are *Shari'ah* (law), *Tariqah* and *Ma'rifah* (gnosis). Veneration of a Sufi master continued posthumously at his tomb, especially on the anniversary of his birth. Relics of Sufi saints, such as their clothes and utensils, are often preserved by their orders. The saints play an important part not only in Sunni Islam, but also in Shi'a orthodoxy. In Shi'a Islam, the term *wilayah* denotes the position of authority of the *imam*, who claims direct descent from the Prophet. This *imam* alone knows the esoteric interpretation of the *Quran*.

Free Will and Predestination

This subject requires an answer to this question : Is salvation achieved only by divine choice or is it achieved through personal efforts ? There are two ways of thinking about the freedom of the will in spiritual matters i.e. 1—free will as a freedom of choice and 2—free will as the absence of compulsion. In the first case one does freely, though he has also the power to choose to do, and in the second case one willingly does without actively choosing. For him it is a voluntary necessity. In the first case freedom seems incompatible with divine determination and in the second case, it is opposed not to causality but to restraint. Predestination connotes here the voluntary divine choice for salvation. Predestination has often been considered contradictory to free will, but sometimes both are held together as paradoxical yet complimentary aspects of truth. Free will is considered not as freedom of choice but as voluntary necessity. Predestined will, thus, acts freely and with consequent responsibility for its action, even though it lacks the power to choose its actions.

In Sikhism, Hinduism and Buddhism

All these three religions believe in the doctrine of *Karma* and transmigration. This doctrine constitutes a kind of determinism, whereby the individual's lot in life is determined by his behaviour in the past lives, but it also implies that the soul is in charge of its future destiny. This factor

implies the freedom of will and not fatalism. According to *Guru Granth Sahib*, the Will of God is supreme. Everyone works under the Will of the Lord and none is out of it. (Japu, p. 1). There is, however, freedom regarding the *Kriyaman* or *Agami Karmas* (the *Karmas*, which are to be performed by an individual). In this respect the analogy of the hunter is given, who is standing armed with the bow and arrows. He is in the process of shooting the arrow, but still he can think of the validity or invalidity of the act before releasing the arrow. Because of the freedom the Sikh Gurus and the radical saints have laid stress on effort. Guru Arjan Dev says, "Live your life, always making an earnest effort, abide in comfort while earning and meet the Lord by contemplation on Him, so that you are absolved of all anxieties." (Var Gujri M. 5, p. 522). The idea of predestination leaves no scope for the freedom of the will, but the Sikh scripture lays stress on effort on the part of the individual and the Grace of God. Guru Nanak Dev says, "The human birth is attained by *Karmas*, but the final emancipation comes through Grace." (Japu, p. 2). Though in Hinduism, there is an element of free-will, as mentioned above, but there are some schools which maintain personal theism and an Omnipotent God. The Vaishnava sect of Madhva believed that blessedness is predestined for some and damnation for the others. God's good pleasure works in it and not the merits or demerits of the souls. In Buddhism, it is not the soul, but the *Karma*, which travels from one birth to the other. Moreover Buddha is silent about God; hence the seeker uses his free-will for the efforts to be made in order to reach the state of *arahant* or *bodhisattava*.

In Judaism

Though the Jews consider themselves as chosen people of God and in Hebrew scriptures there are stories of God's choice of particular persons to fulfil special offices. But there are several passages in the scriptures, which assert that God does not lead, persons astray, but creates them with the

freedom not to sin. Rabbinic literature teaches both God's fore-sight and providence directing all things and human freedom of choice with respect to the performance of good or bad acts.

In Christianity

Predestination had an important place in Christian thought. According to Paul, predestination results from the divine initiative and is grounded in grace, so that no one may boast of being saved by his own efforts. St. Augustine thought that the will was unable to do the good that God commanded unless aided by Grace. The Protestant reformers found the doctrine of predestination useful in their insistence on the primacy of divine grace in salvation. The Church of England adopted the predestinarian theology. The Roman Catholic theology stressed human responsibility in the process of salvation.

In Islam

In Islamic thought the doctrines of free-will and predestination have been very important issues. The Muslim scripture exhorts submission before the divine sovereignty and declares even that "God leads astray whom He pleases and guides whom He pleases". But there is also presupposition of choice on the part of persons, who have been summoned by revelation. But one of the first group of Islamic philosophers, the Mu'tazilah, argued that, however much other events were determined beforehand, there was a free human choice of good or evil. Later Muslim theologians emphatically teaching predestination, nonetheless tried to reconcile it with free-will through varying interpretations of the doctrine of acquisition. According to this doctrine, man is regarded as voluntarily willing his actions and thus 'acquiring' them even though God has created these acts so that they occur by necessity.

Priesthood

In Sikhism

Sikhism rejects all sacraments, ritualism, formalism and symbolism, therefore no ceremonies or rites are to be performed like Hinduism. Consequently no priest is needed. The main purpose of life according to Sikhism, is the realisation of Ultimate Reality, for which the Gurus have laid down a moral and spiritual discipline. Man is a social being, therefore his actions not only pertain to his individual self, but are also related to society. As a created being, he has also relations with the Creation. Therefore he has to perform threefold duties—duties for the self, duties in relation to society and duties in relation to the Creator. He considers God as Father and all the human beings as brothers and sisters. He believes in the Fatherhood of God and Brotherhood of man. All the humanity is a universal brotherhood for him, without consideration of caste, colour and creed. He prays and works for the welfare of all the people of the world. His motto is *Sarbat da Bhala* i.e. welfare of all. His path is *pravriti marga* (the path of action). He earns for himself and his family and is even in a position to give tithe (*daswandh*) for the good of others. With the attainment of *artha* (wealth), his *kama* (worldly desires) is fulfilled and following the path of piety (*dharma*), he gradually matures himself under the guidance of the preceptor for his real destination i.e. *moksha* (salvation). The spirit of the precep-

tor manifests itself in the company of the saints or good people known as *Sadh Sangat* (the holy congregation). The congregation is a part of the society pursuing the path of spiritual unfoldment. Every follower of Guru Nanak Dev or a Sikh is a member of this congregation. The holy congregation is presided over by the True Guru. But who is the True Guru in Sikhism, when the line of personal Gurus ended with Guru Gobind Singh in A.D. 1708 ? The Guru for all times now is *Guru Granth Sahib* or *Gurbani* which is the embodiment of the spirit of the ten Sikh Gurus. Guru Gobind Singh bestowed the Guruship on *Granth Sahib*. The seal of Guruship had already been put on *Gurbani* by the previous Gurus. *Gurbani* has also been called *Guru-Shabad* (the word of the Guru). Guru Nanak Dev had said, "The Word (*Shabad*) is the Guru, profound and serene; without the Word, the world moves about in madness." (Sorath M. 1, p. 635). He again said, "The Word is the Guru and the mind attuned to it is the disciple." (Siddh Goshta, p. 943). Guru Ram Das said, "The *Bani* is the Guru and Guru is the *Bani*; all the ambrosia is contained in *Bani*. Whatever the *Bani* says, the Sikh must accept and the Guru, manifesting himself in his Word, bestows emancipation." (Nat M. 4, p. 982). The *Bani* of *Guru Granth Sahib* is *Khasam Ki Bani* (The Word of the Lord), therefore, the *Bani* of the Guru is the direct revelation from the Lord. (Tilang M. 1, p. 722).

A Sikh, who recites the *Bani* of *Guru Granth Sahib* and performs all the functions in accordance with the dictates of *Gurbani* is called a *Granthi*. He accords full reverence to the scripture, which is accorded to the living Guru. But a *Granthi*, appointed by the congregation, is not necessarily a priest. Any Sikh, considered worthy of the job can be appointed a *Granthi*. Guru Arjan Dev, while installing the scripture in Hari Mandir, appointed Baba Buddha as the first *Granthi* of Darbar Sahib. Later on Mata Sundari Ji appointed the great Sikh scholar Bhai Mani Singh as the *Granthi* of Darbar Sahib. The congregation also makes proper arrangements for the well-being of the *Granthi* and

his family. In Sikhism, the position of a priest is not at all hereditary. Thus there is no priestcraft in Sikhism like Hinduism.

In Hinduism

Hindu priesthood began with the ritualistic Vedic religion. Among the four castes, Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Shudras, the Brahmins belonged to the uppermost class and the priestly class, who performed all the ritualistic functions. With the expansion of Vedic civilization across Northern India, the public ceremonies required three fires and a staff of priests and the domestic ceremonies were performed upon a single fire and priest. Several schools (*sakhas*) of priesthood developed, each of which was linked to one of the Vedas. These schools produced highly skilled priesthood. The sacrificer (*yajamana*) belonged to anyone of the three high castes (*dvijas*) who engaged one or more priests for the performance of his rites. His family priest was called the *purohita*, who also acted as the guru of the family. With the emergence of Hindu theistic movements, devotion (*bhakti*) and worship (*puja*) were promoted instead of sacrifice. The Brahmins were now divided into temple officiants in villages, towns and cities. In the early mediaeval period, the priesthood included three distinct groups viz., 1—Vaidikas, who specialised in the text and ritual of anyone of the Vedic schools, 2—those who specialised in Puranas and Agamas in regional vernaculars and 3—non-textual priests connected with variety of shrines and cults. Modern priesthood retains many features of the past including the hereditary *yajamani* relationship.

In Buddhism

There are various Buddhist ceremonies and rituals in Theravada (Hinayana), Mahayana and Vajrayana rituals. There are duly ordained priests. The priests performing the rites are required to give their undivided, unremitting and

devout attention throughout the service. Every priest is instructed to join heart and mind in the exhortations, responses, formulas etc. and to correct every error lest the oversight of a single mistake should vitiate the efficacy of the rite. Previously to the ordination the candidates are subjected to a strict and searching examination as to their knowledge of the discourses of Buddha, the duties of a priest. The discipline of a priest requires him not to indulge in sexual intercourse. If he indulges in such act, he ceases to be a priest. Robes made of pieces of rag are a requisite of a priest. A priest must not take with dishonest intent, anything which is not given to him. If he takes, he ceases to be a priest. A priest must not knowingly destroy human life. In short, not even the life of an ant. If he does, he ceases to be a priest. A priest must not lay claim to more than human perfection, even by saying, "I delight in a solitary hut." If he does, he ceases to be a priest.

In Judaism

The most common biblical term for the Jewish priest is the Hebrew word 'kohen'. The term 'Levi' is also applied to priest. Traditionally, the tribe of 'Levi' is the priestly tribe. It is one of the twelve tribes of Israel. The Levites (priests) rely on cultic emoluments or tithe for their support. One family of priests was considered fit to officiate in the cult. Throughout the period of monarchies, priests were appointed by the heads of the families, kings or military commanders. Priests were consecrated persons, subject to laws of purity. They also wore distinctive dress. They administered temple business and maintained temple facilities. They were supported by levies and donations to the Temple. They were required to partake of sacred meals within the Temples. There are five categories of priestly function viz., Cultic functions, Oracular functions, Therapeutic functions, Instructional and Juridical functions and Administrative and Political functions.

In Christianity

Christian priesthood has its roots in the priesthood of Jesus Christ. During his lifetime, Jesus gave some of his followers a share in his mission of proclaiming God's Kingdom in word and deed. The persons who were commissioned by Jesus, continued his mission. They were the ambassadors for Christ. These ambassadors do not represent an absent Christ, because he is present in the Christian community. Similarly, Christian priests mediate the word and work of Christ, not by standing between the community and Christ but by making his saving message and action available to the community. Priestly terminology is never applied in the New Testament to ministers of the Christian community. Out of the New Testament books, *Hebrew* offers a developed doctrine of Jesus as the one Christian priest, whose priesthood has replaced the Levitical priesthood of the Jerusalem Temple. The idea of a new Christian priesthood that replaced the Levitical priesthood emerged only after the destruction of the Temple in A.D. 70, when gentiles became numerically dominant in the Christian community. Even *Hebrew* does not associate Christ's priesthood with the last Supper or the Eucharist. This required a further development : the emergence at the end of the first century, of the explicit teaching that the Eucharist was a sacrifice, presided over by a Christian priest. From the beginning of the second century, Christian writers increasingly applied cultic sacerdotal terminology to the church's ministers. Two factors encouraged this development : the desire to present the church as the new Israel, in which God's promises to the old Israel were fulfilled and the desire to show to the pagan world that the Christians possessed a priestly system and worship superior to all others. The Jewish-Christian churches were governed by presbyters, and gentile churches by a bishop or deacons. These presbyteral and episcopal systems merged in the decades following the death of the apostles and that by the mid-second century the threefold ministry

of a 'monarchical' bishop, assisted by presbyters and deacons, was established practically everywhere. There were several factors which favoured the acceptance of this system of monarchical episcopacy. The local churches wanted a senior presbyter to represent Christ at the Eucharist, to ordain others and to represent the community in correspondence with other churches, in general church gatherings and in disputes with gnostics and other dissidents. Rapid clericalization of the priesthood followed the proclamation of Christianity as the official religion of the Roman empire by Constantine in 313. Civic privileges granted to the clergy encouraged the development of a clerical caste system. Bishops began to become prelates, more remote from their clergy and flocks than their predecessors had been in the days of persecution. The multiplication of church buildings, served by presbyters, and the decline in missionary activity favoured the development of a more cultic image of the priest. The Reformation criticism of priesthood focussed on the priest's cultic role. The Roman Catholic response to the Council of Trent to the Protestant reformers' positions on priesthood was brief. In its dogmatic decrees the council emphasised the priest's cultic role, rejected the proposition that priests who did not preach were no longer priests, but still managed to speak of them, in Luther's words, as 'Ministers of the word and sacraments'.

In Islam

Like Sikhism, there is no priesthood or clergy in Islam. But there is a class, which has played a clerical role in Islamic society. This class has acquired social and religious prestige identical in kind to that exercised by the priests of other religions. This class is called '*ulama*' (learned) or '*fuqaha*' (lawyers). They are the scholars and custodians of Law. The legal Islamic texts are the work of these mediaeval '*ulama*'.

Salvation

Nirvana/Final Emancipation

In Sikhism

The chief objective of human life is considered God-realization by the Sikh Gurus. The human body is the only medium, through which the objective can be fulfilled. (Majh M. 3, p. 124). The human body is the temple of God; It is a microcosm. It is sheer wastage of time to search for God outside the body. (Majh M. 5, p. 102). Our body is primarily the abode of our soul. The Higher Soul or God is hidden within this soul. Unless we know our soul fully well, it is impossible to know God. Our soul is our 'self'. Our body is one of its outer covering. In itself, the self is a luminous non-elemental substance, which is a part and parcel of Brahman. The curtain of illusion cannot be lifted without knowing the 'self'. (Dhanasari M. 9, p. 684). But how can we know our 'self' ? The self can be known with the help of the Guru. Guru Nanak Dev says, "Everyone praises himself, he wants self-aggrandisement. The self cannot be realised without the Guru, nothing occurs from speaking or listening. If one realises the Word, his ego will melt away." (Sri Raga M. 1, p. 58). The annihilation of ego and the recitation of the Name of the Lord brings the realisation of the self. Whosoever realises the self, realises God, just as the tree of nectar will bear further the fruit of nectar. Whosoever tastes this fruit of nectar realises the Truth. (Asa M. 1,

p. 121). The qualities or virtues form the foundation, on which can be raised a spiritual edifice. With these qualities the self shines like a mirror in which the Higher Soul manifests Itself. The state of God-realisation or final emancipation is known as *Sahaj* in Sikhism. It is also called *Chautha Pad* (the fourth stage) or *Param Pad* (the supreme state) or *Turiya*. It is the stable-mind-state. It is the zenith of the mystic achievement, but it occurs only with the perfect Grace of the Lord. The concept of *Sahaj* in Sikhism is different from the Hindu concept of *Mukti* (liberation/salvation) and the Buddhist concept of *Nirvana*. The true Sikh has no desire to enter heaven. He even discards *mukti* as defined in Shastras. (Maru M. 5, p. 1078). He wants to remain always at the feet of the Lord, filled with extreme devotion and love. The extreme devotion of the disciple does not make him mad and senseless, but inspires him for nobler action and attainment of higher knowledge. God-realisation is the result of both effort and Grace. Guru Nanak Dev has talked of five regions in this connection, the first being the region of piety and the last that of Truth. The seeker is born in the region of piety (*Dharam Khand*). His ideal is the attainment of the region of Truth (*Sach Khand*). The maturity of pious actions leads the seeker to the region of knowledge (*Gyan Khand*), in which he becomes aware of the vastness of the universe and its infinite expanse. With the maturity of knowledge, the seeker enters the region of effort (*Saram Khand*). In this region of beauty, his mind and intellect become super-fine. This brings the seeker to the region of Grace (*Karam Khand*), where he attains the necessary spiritual strength in order to enter that last region i.e. the region of Truth (*Sach Khand*). In this region, the journey of the seeker comes to an end. He realises Truth i.e. God. Thus piety becomes the basis of God-realization. A person who realises Brahman in this world is *Jivan-mukta* (liberated while alive). He is a *Brahm-Gyani* (the knower of Brahman). When he leaves this world, his soul is merged in the Lord as a ray merges in the sun or a drop of water

merges in the ocean. The state of God-realization can never be explained, as a dumb person can never describe the relish of the sweets.

In Hinduism

In Hinduism, the word *mukti* is used for salvation i.e. freedom from bondage of *Karma* and transmigration. Hinduism is a polytheistic and ritualistic faith. In order to end the cycle of births and deaths or get the entry in the heaven of god or goddess who is being worshipped, the devotee has to appease the deity by the performance of suitable rites and ceremonies in accordance with the directives of the scriptures. The *Bhagvad Gita* gives a special view of the salvific power of Vishnu. The god assures his devotees of his desire to save those, who worship him with love and devotion. Any god or goddess is considered as the saviour, including the incarnations like Rama and Krishna, who are said to have special concern for the welfare of their devotees, and who showers his grace on the worshippers. The devotee can also become a *Jivan-mukta*, by gaining liberation (*mukti*) while still living. In *Advaita* (monism) of Shankara, the oneness with Brahman implies no more rebirth and this state of liberation is blissful. According to *Vishishtadvaita* (qualified monism) of Ramanuja, for the achievement of God's Grace, self-surrender is a prerequisite. The *Dvaita* (dualism) of Madhva held that God's sole task was to guide the universe in working out the results of *Karmas*, which flowed from the inner nature of the individual.

In Buddhism

With respect to salvation, there are two goals in Buddhism either the birth in heaven or liberation. The Buddhist literature distinguishes four paths of salvation viz., 1—ascetic practices, 2—monastic discipline, 3—the bodhisattava path and 4—the vajrayana or 'diamond vehicle'. Asceticism involves seclusion of the body and

therefore also restraint of speech. The ascetic practices were meant to purify the mind and make it fit for pure life. The monastic discipline constitutes commandments for the monks and nuns. This discipline culminates in the figure of *arhat*. The *bodhisattava* path of Mahayana Buddhism consists of ten stages (*bhumis*). It begins with the *bodhisattva* vow to forego one's own enlightenment until all beings have realised liberation. The ten stages are usually associated with ten perfections (*paramitas*). On the last stage, the *bodhisattava* can be referred to as Buddha. The *bodhisattava* path emphasises compassion (*karuna*) as the basis of that part of the *bodhisattava* vow that aims at the benefit of all sentient beings. Vajrayana or the diamond vehicle is the *mantra* path and is intended to quicken the progress to enlightenment by employing three avenues of body, speech and mind through the use of *mudra* (gesture), *mantra* (incantation) and *samadhi* (concentration). In Buddhism, the word 'Nirvana' is used for salvation. The emphasis of Mahayana Buddhism on *Shunya* (emptiness) suggests the importance of a kind of intellectual vision which is parallel to Buddha's own enlightenment. In Buddhism, there is a system of gradations of heavens, which correspond to different levels of moral and spiritual attainment. With the trio of Buddha, *Dharma* and *Sangha* in the monastic community, the laity are closely connected.

In Judaism

The story of the Jewish people gives the Jew a sense of his election by God as part of an ongoing drama of history in which both God and the Jewish people will be vindicated. The idea of God's saving work is applied primarily to the group as a whole in Judaism, in which the people of Israel, who have a special destiny and a crucial role in the providential unfolding of history. There is an important thinking regarding the coming of the Messiah, leading to the restoration of Israel. The interpretation in Judaism of reward and punishment ranges from a general belief that

righteousness will eventually win out and wickedness fail. The doctrine of world to come refers to the eternal bliss the soul will enjoy. The humans must struggle in order to make the good their own and merit the nearness of God forever. To the Jewish people, God, the Lord is simultaneously the God of retribution and the God of love. There are three elements in the love of God; joy, devotion and zeal. To love God is to passionately desire His nearness. There must be no ulterior motive in such love.

In Christianity

The early Christian view of the sacrament of baptism implied, that the initiate on becoming a Christian, dies like Christ and is resurrected with Christ. He is assured of ultimate salvation because of the ritual or sacramental union with Christ, as victor over sin and death. This is repeated and reinforced by the eucharistic sacrament, where Christ's eternal life is imparted to the faithful person in the bread and wine. In Protestantism, there is emphasis upon conversion-experiences, being 'born again' and attaining an inner illumination, concerning one's own salvation. Christian theology has emphasised eternal punishment as the fate of some. The emphasis on divine judgment suggests the radical differentiation of the saved from the sinners, but recent thinking gives a psychological interpretation of the old pictures of heaven and hell and stresses either alienation from or closeness to God in the events and vicissitudes of this life. There is the Christian doctrine of original sin, through the primordial acts of Adam and Eve.

In Islam

Islam talks about the idea of individual salvation seriously in terms of the attainment of either heaven or hell in the Last Day of Judgment. The Muslim scripture and the *Hadith* throw light on the life of the Prophet. They become exemplars of the kind of actions and attitudes expected of the Muslim, if he is to please God. The revelation to the

Prophet provides the matrix for Islamic life and gives assurance that from within this life the faithful will gain salvation. Highly important in Islam is the question of ritual purity, because without it, the prayers of the worshipper are rendered invalid. The faithful will have a vision of God in Paradise.



SINGH BROTHERS
AMRITSAR
